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Lamorinda Baseball Preview Acalanes, Miramonte off to a strong start

By Alex Crook



Acalanes' Grant Diede swings against Northgate in Acalanes' 3-0 win Photo Doug Kohen

defend their NCS title in Lafayette as they visit Acalanes on March 29.

Campolindo:

Campolindo, the defending DFAL and division II NCS Champion, finished last year with an 8-4 league record and an overall record of 21-7. A key returner for the Cougars this year is junior catcher Austin Rei, who was named last year's DFAL Most Valuable Player. Rei hit .350 last season, with three homeruns.

Also playing a key role for Campo will be junior pitcher James Marvel and senior pitcher Matt Bruzzone. Marvel made first-team all DFAL last year with a 1.12 ERA, while Bruzzone was named honorable mention. Bruzzone will have to step up, though, to replace recently-graduated pitcher Nick Russ.

"We are all really looking forward to the year. We've got a solid core of young guys returning and we feel really comfortable with each other, just like a family. We've got some new guys working hard as well and as a team we've got some high expectations. It's going to be fun," says Marvel. Newcomers for the Cougars include sophomore infielder Ryan Hooper and two freshmen, infielder Denis Karas and pitcher Matt Ladrech.

Campolindo is currently 0-2 after losses to Heritage and Clayton Valley (3-0-1); both teams are tough programs. The Cougars will open DFAL against visiting Dougherty Valley on March 29.

Acalanes:

Acalanes, although four years removed from an NCS title, has a history of success on the baseball diamond. Still, last year proved to be a difficult season for the Dons. They finished 15-10 overall, with a 5-7 league record and a fifth place league finish. Acalanes lost in the first round of NCS playoffs.

The Dons graduated pitcher John Treat, but Acalanes returns first baseman Drew Gaylord and utility man Spencer Henderson. Both juniors were named to the DFAL Honorable Mention Team last year. "I would not count us out of the NCS championships," said Evan Heptig, senior shortstop and captain for Acalanes. The Dons also welcome freshman shortstop Austin Fisher.

Acalanes is on a roll right now, boasting an early 5-0, which they will put to the test in their first league game March 29 against rival Miramonte. The five early wins were over Mount Eden, Bishop O'Dowd, Northgate, Skyline, and Sonoma Valley.

All three Lamorinda high school baseball teams are poised to have strong seasons and a chance at the DFAL title. Both Campolindo and Miramonte are coming off North Coast Section (NCS) Championship seasons, and Acalanes looks to build on improvements made last season.

Miramonte:

Last year, Miramonte finished in second place in the league standings behind Campolindo, but went on to win the division III NCS title, their second straight. The Mats return a first-team all DFAL outfielder in junior Matt Bonomo, but lose two former first-team all DFAL nominees to graduation, third-baseman Michael Mann and catcher Kevin Paulsen.

The Matadors also return a second-team all DFAL player from the previous year, junior pitcher Spencer Marx. Miramonte's roster consists entirely of upperclassmen.

The Mats are 4-1 and all four wins have come in dominant fashion. The lone loss was to Heritage (3-1-0), who also beat Campolindo. The Matadors are undefeated at home. They will open league play to



Miramonte's Chris Perry crosses home plate in the 8-3 win over Hogan. Photo Linda Epperson

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