

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Verdon Repeats at State

By Nina Mohan



Carrie Verdon Photo Tim Fong

In the four years that Campolindo's Carrie Verdon has been running, she's emerged as a top talent and scored some impressive wins. Most recently, Verdon won the 2011 CIF State cross country championship.

This was her second straight win at state and, like last year, it was tough race. At the 2.5 mile mark, Verdon was in second place, eight seconds behind Karlie Garcia of Oakmont-Roseville. But she picked up her pace to beat Garcia by one second, finishing the 3.1 mile race in 17 minutes and 19 seconds.

She clocked the fastest Northern California girls' time and the second fastest time for all the girls' divisions at the CIF meet.

Verdon had given no thought to running until her brother suggested that she try out for Campolindo's cross-country team. He told her that it was a "fun thing to do."

Running comes naturally to Verdon, but great talent is not a without practice for Verdon, and she's constantly working to improve.

"You have to get in good weeks and months of training to keep getting better, you have to stay consistent," said Verdon.

"Right now I'm building endurance. We're in our off-

season and we're working on our mechanics, and drills to warm up and cool down. We're working on our abs and legs. The strength training works with the mechanics to make you better and faster," she continued.

Focus and attitude are also essential to Verdon's success: "Going into a race you really have to prepare mentally," she said.

"I always think that half is physical and half is mental. Going in, I think about myself, not the other competitors. I think 'what can I control to make this the best?' and focus on myself and on my team."

Verdon worked to mentally prepare for this year's CIF championship.

In 2010, Verdon also came from behind to win, that time after a fall. The pressure for a repeat win, plus the fear of another fall might faze some, but Verdon was focused on the tough competition.

"I wasn't worried about a second fall. This year, we had a lot of new competition going in, a lot of really good competition, and that was really exciting because you knew you had to push yourself harder to get a better time."

This fall Verdon will run for the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her decision to go Boulder was based on a gut instinct.

"Boulder is a really awesome town. I landed in the airport and I just knew, I just had this feeling. I visited a lot of other schools and I didn't have that same feeling, so I think it was a really good choice."

The coach and the team confirmed her feeling. "[They were] really amazing, everyone was really nice and welcoming, and they have a really good program," she said.

Verdon is also looking forward to how running at a high altitude will help her improve.

"Actually, altitude training is proven to be really good for you, but definitely the first couple of months are going to be tough," she said.

"I went up for my recruiting visit and did a long run and it was pretty rough. But there have been a lot of girls from California who've gone up there and dealt with the altitude change and they've been fine so I'm not nervous, it'll just take some getting used to."

Along with competing at the college level Verdon also plans to train for the 2016 Olympics and hopes to make a career of running.

"I want to become a professional runner, and compete in the Olympics in 2016. Things could change in college, things could happen, but it's definitely a goal to be a professional runner, and to go the Olympics."

Prep Soccer Season Heats Up Before Winter Break

By Marissa Harnett

December marked the beginning of league competition for high school soccer. All three boys' Lamorinda teams recorded wins in their opening games. Miramonte defeated Dublin, 2-1. Campolindo beat Alhambra, 5-3. Acalanes outlasted Las Lomas, 2-1.

The second game of the season brought an early season challenge for rivals Campo and Acalanes. Acalanes has been a strong force in boys' soccer in Lamorinda. Campo finished in the middle for several previous seasons, but the 2010-2011 season saw the Cougars rise to the top and capture the #1 DFAL ranking. Last year, the two teams boasted identical records of 8-1-3, losing only to each other. They went on to compete in the NCS championship where the Cougars captured a 3-2 win.

December 9th was the first official meeting for Campo and Acalanes since the championship and the final score reflected the fact that it is tough competition, the teams tied at 1-1.

Acalanes coach Paul Curtis predicted that the rematch would be challenging. "In order to play well, our boys will need to execute on the plan. That is always our goal, no matter the opposition. We look to improve ourselves and our abilities."

The frigid Friday night game hosted by Campo started out with fast-paced aggressive play by both sides.

Both teams had other scoring opportunities, but neither team could convert. Six minutes into the game, Campo netted the ball off a cross with a textbook header into the top corner of the net. However, the referee called it a "no goal," because of a foul on the defender. Minutes later Acalanes executed a nearly identical play with a header that missed.

At half-time, the game was a scoreless tie.

The second half brought the teams back to the field with increased intensity and determination. Emotions flared with every referee's whistle.

With just eleven minutes remaining, Acalanes lucked into a goal. A cross-kick from the right wing sailed into perfect scoring position. Campo freshman defender Ryan Donat, positioned in front of the goal, attempted to clear the ball. Instead, he inadvertently tipped the ball into his own net to give the Dons a 1-0 lead.

Undeterred by the mishap, Campo capitalized on an opportunity to even the score with just six minutes left. Senior co-captain Nick Palano touched the ball into the goal to tie the game 1-1 off of an assist from his twin brother and co-captain, Sam Palano.

With five minutes left on the clock, Acalanes had their best opportunity to score the go-ahead goal with a penalty kick by junior Dan Glascock. Campo goalkeeper sophomore

Jeff Lefcourt stopped the kick to preserve the tie. Lefcourt recorded seven total saves in the game.

As a younger team comprised mostly of underclassmen, Campo coach Shane Carney admits that inexperience is a weakness for the team. "This year, our major challenge will continue to be the younger players maintaining a consistently high level of play. I trust my guys though and have no problem playing any player on my team, regardless of age or size."

Despite the age and experience disadvantage, the Cougars still feel confident that they can make a play to reclaim the NCS title this year which could likely be a rematch against Acalanes. "For us to beat them, we need to stick to our style of play and maintain control of the ball."

Carney said that in the Friday match-up the team was too excited. "We got a little anxious and forced a lot of things, which resulted in the tie."

Miramonte Records an Upset

Across town on that Friday night, Miramonte got a confidence boost. Dublin came to the game with a 5-1 record to Miramonte's 1-2. After being down at the half, 1-0, the Mats came back to score twice in the second half, winning 2-1.

Back at Miramonte after a five year hiatus, coach Fabian Amezaga is challenged with trying to piece back together a program that has lacked structure in recent years. "They are used to being on the bottom tier, but they're starting to believe that they can achieve more," said Amezaga of his team. He is hoping to create an opportunity for his team to make a rise in the standings similar to Campo's. The Mats were frequent winners of the NCS championships in the early 2000s. Amezaga's goal is to have a chance to play in the NCS tournament this season.

Records as of December 16:

Boys	Acalanes	3-0-1 (in DFAL)	5-0-3 (overall)
	Campo	2-0-1 (in DFAL)	8-0-1 (overall)
	Miramonte	1-0-1 (in DFAL)	2-2-1 (overall)
Girls	Acalanes	0-2-1 (in DFAL)	0-3-1 (overall)
	Campo	2-0-0 (in DFAL)	4-1-1 (overall)
	Miramonte	1-2-0 (in DFAL)	2-3-0 (overall)

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