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## 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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