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Campo, Acalanes battle for DFAL Title

By Brandon Duran



Photo Dennis Lee

Campolindo ace James Marvel was on the mound for the Cougars, with a few collegiate scouts on hand to watch the Duke-bound pitcher work. Marvel, with some impressive heat and a nasty curve, struck out five and had no problems in the first two innings. Trouble found Marvel, in the third inning, when the Dons exploded for five runs off six hits, giving the Dons the 5-0 lead.

Andrew Merken, the junior righty, put on an impressive display of pitching for Acalanes, only allowing one runner on base through four innings.

Marvel settled down and retired nine of the next ten batters, before he was replaced for the final inning by junior Tyler Luckhurst.

Offensively, the Cougars couldn't get much going. In the sixth inning their two leadoff hitters reached base safely, but the following three went down in order. Merken didn't overpower Campo, but instead forced ground-ball, and pop-fly outs to blow through their batting order. He kept the Cougars from scoring and secured the 5-0 victory for the Dons.

He finished with a complete game victory, giving up four hits, and zero earned runs. Marvel received the loss for the Cougars, giving up eight hits, and four earned runs. Campo found their bats against Petaluma on Thursday, May 3, winning 20-8. The win moved them to second place in the DFAL. Campolindo, second in the DFAL, takes on top-dog Dougherty Valley on May 10.

After the game Acalanes head coach Justin Santich-Hughes spoke highly of his pitcher's performance. "He did great. He threw a lot of strikes, stayed away from them, and used his sinker. He probably threw 95% fastballs today."

Santich-Hughes was happy with the win but remained focused on closing out the season.

"We can celebrate this one for a little bit, but we have Dougherty Valley on Thursday. We control our own destiny now. If we don't end up in first, it's our fault."

Acalanes couldn't string together back-to-back wins, losing to the Wildcats. The loss dropped the Dons to third place in the DFAL. Acalanes hosts Miramonte on May 15.

Miramonte:

Senior experience has played a significant role for each of the Lamorinda teams this year, especially for Miramonte. Seniors Paddy O'Brien and Drew Jackson have stepped up as leaders of the Miramonte squad. The Mats have fallen back in the DFAL standings, but have maintained a solid record overall, 12-7-0.

Coach Vince Dell'Aquila of Miramonte noted the strength of the DFAL.

"The division two teams in our league are very, very good. I believe our league is going to give everybody a run for their money in North Coast".

Last Thursday, Miramonte lost to Alhambra, dropping to last in the league.

With five games remaining, Coach Dell'Aquila talked about the NCS playoffs, "There's a lot of good teams. At that time of year everyone elevates their game, but I think there is a lot of luck involved [in winning it all]."

Miramonte closes out the season with games against Acalanes and Campolindo.

As the North Coast Section playoffs approach, both Campolindo and Acalanes are hoping to repeat as NCS Champions. Campolindo finished first in the Division II tournament and Acalanes earned top honors in Division III. Although the post-season tournament will separate the Lamorinda rivals, the DFAL title is still up for grabs and both schools, along with Dougherty Valley, are in the hunt.

With a chance to gain a share of first place, Acalanes (14-6-0, 6-3-0 as of the press deadline, May 6) traveled to Campolindo (15-3-1, 6-2-0) on Tuesday, May 1 looking to avenge the 12-1 loss they suffered to the Cougars in their first meeting.

Before the game Campo head coach Max Luckhurst spoke about the Lamorinda rivalry, saying, "It's great. These kids all grow up together through little league, and club teams. They hang out and talk all the time so the rivalries are just fun."

Luckhurst added that although the rivalries are fun, all the games are tough. "There's not one game in the DFAL that's bigger than any other, because anybody can beat anybody."



Photo Dennis Lee

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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