

Published November 7th, 2012

Practice! Practice! Practice! Prep basketball starts this week

By Michael Sakoda



Kiran Shastri Photo Kevin Nguyen

High school basketball teams reported for practice on Monday. While the future for Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte looks bright, it's always tough to win in the DFAL.

Acalanes finished last season with an 18-10 record, going just 6-6 in DFAL play. They qualified for the NCS playoffs and beat Piner High School in the first round before falling to El Cerrito. The Dons were the only Lamorinda team that failed to qualify for the CIF Tournament.

The Dons will return just five players to varsity-junior center Buster Souza, senior forward Ivan Harewood and senior guards Brendan Kirbach, Eric Thomas and Aaron Edwards.

Souza will likely be a focus of the offense and Thomas and Edwards are expected to move into bigger roles.

The Dons do have some players coming up from junior varsity. "Matt Thomas, Zack Kisner and Ross Teichman, who are all going to be impact players this year," said Dons head coach Darrell Hirashima.

Hirashima understands his team's weakness, but also has confidence in the team's strengths.

"We don't have the quickness or the star talent some of the other teams have," Hirashima admitted. "But defensively, I think we'll be able to match up with the big strong teams out there. Offensively, we definitely have some serious weapons in the arsenal... just not as deep as we've previously been."

Hirashima remains optimistic about his team making the playoffs. "We have a strong group of guys, and if we dedicate ourselves to what we're doing, we could make a little run there at the end."

Campolindo finished last season with a 23-7 record, going 9-3 in conference play, clinching the DFAL title. In the NCS playoffs, Campo defeated Drake then knocked off league rival Miramonte before falling to Bishop O'Dowd. They qualified for the CIF Tournament, but fell in the first round to Foothill of Palo Cedro.

The Cougars return six players-junior guard Issac Christian, sophomore guard Matt O'Reilly, junior forward Justin Dunn, senior guards Jack Evans (the only returning starter), Tyler Garrison and Matt McCue.

"We should be a stronger defensive team this year," said Campo head coach Matt Watson. "We're always going to try to put the screws to someone."

Last season, the Cougars scored 62.8 ppg, while holding their opponents to just 55.5 ppg.

Offensively, Watson said keep an eye on the sophomore. "Matt O'Reilly was just a freshman last year... he will contribute a lot more. He's a very good shooter, very good offensive player... He'll contribute almost 100 percent more than he did last year."

Watson emphasized the influence of his three seniors. "They do a lot of policing of the rest of the players, keeping them all on board, reminding them that it's team first," Watson said.

McCue is indeed keeping his eyes focused on the team's goals. "We are planning to... work hard every day in practice and get into the best possible shape we can. The person who really wants to do something finds a way to, the other makes excuses."

Watson said winning the DFAL is no easy feat. "We've got a mix of young guys and just three seniors, so it would be challenging for us to repeat, but I wouldn't put it past us."

Miramonte finished last season with a 20-10 record, 8-4 in DFAL play. They defeated Analy in the first round of the NCS tournament before falling to Campolindo. The Mats were the only Lamorinda team to make it beyond the first round of the CIF Tournament, defeating Sierra before losing to Sacred Heart.

Drew McDonald, in his first season as head coach of the Mats, inherits a strong team. Miramonte returns 10 players, including senior forward and co-captain Kiran Shastri, a first team All-League selection, and junior guard Joey Goodreault, second team All-League.

McDonald is expecting big things from last year's standout, Shastri. "I think we have the league's best player in Kiran Shastri," he said. "He has done a lot of work in the off season to really make himself better, and I'm

expecting him to have an outstanding season."

McDonald is no stranger to the Mats' system; he was an assistant coach for five of the past six seasons. "I'm very familiar with how the guys played in the past. We're going to try to play a little more up-tempo."

Last year, the Mats averaged nearly seven more points than their opponents. "We are going to aspire to be better defensively," McDonald said. "That's probably our number one goal right now."

Despite all the talent and experience on his bench, McDonald doesn't underestimate his opponents. "Campo is the league champ until someone beats them. Acalanes should be very strong. Dublin might be the most talented team... we have our work cut out for us."

While expecting a strong season, McDonald is focused on team play. "Our goal is to be as excellent a basketball team as we can be. If we do that, we'll let the chips fall where they may."

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA