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Riding the Win-Streak

By Michael Sakoda



Matt McCue Photo Kevin Nguyen

The Campolindo boys' basketball team's season appeared to be over, but the Cougars got a second chance and made the most of it. Despite losing an NCS playoff game to San Marin, Campolindo (22-9) qualified for the CIF tournament when Bishop O'Dowd was moved to the open division.

"The night of our loss to San Marin, Coach Watson texted me, telling me there was still a chance we would make the tournament," said Cougars' senior guard Jack Evans. "We focused on staying alive."

Surprising everyone but themselves, they made a run all the way to the Nor Cal Finals before falling to Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Senior guard Matt McCue was excited to get the news. "We had one more chance to redeem ourselves," he explained, "[to] show everyone how good we truly were."

It was a great reward for an even better season. After opening the season with a series of tough road games, the Cougars sat with a losing record, dropping games to Cardinal Newman, Montgomery and Granite Bay.

Campo responded to the rocky start going 15-2, stringing together three five-game winning streaks.

"One of our greatest wins was our second game against Las Lomas at home," Evans said. "We used that game to remind ourselves of the kind of basketball we needed to play to win games."

In the waning weeks of the regular season, Campo suffered two straight losses, including a heartbreaker at league rival Miramonte, but they closed DFAL play with a 3-0 burst.

In a season of winning streaks, the Cougars were prepared to go on another streak in the playoffs.

They stormed into the CIF Tournament, winning three straight road games- at Burlingame, an overtime thriller at

El Cerrito, and at Enterprise, becoming only the second team in school history to reach the Northern California Championship game (the 2005 team reached the mark).

The Cougars rolled into No. 2 El Cerrito's house with confidence, and pulled out a tremendous 69-65 win. "I'll never forget Walter Brennan hitting an NBA range three to put us into overtime against El Cerrito," McCue commented.

The Cougars lost an overtime heartbreaker 55-52 in the Nor Cal Finals of the CIF Tournament to Sacred Heart Cathedral on March 16. Evans hit four three-pointers including a clutch basket with 44.1 seconds left in regulation to lead the Cougars, but it wasn't enough to propel them to the school's first State Finals appearance.

"I couldn't be more proud of what these guys accomplished this season. They did a hell of a job," said head coach Matt Watson after the game.

Watson was proud of his seniors' effort. "Matt McCue, he's a freaking stud. The kid's five nine, a buck fifty, and all heart," he said. "Jack Evans is an incredible senior leader. He knocked down some big shots tonight, made some great plays, got some big defensives stops. (Our) seniors are going to be missed tremendously."

The Cougars lose four players to graduation this year-Evans, McCue, and forwards Tyler Garrison and John Schmitz-but the future looks bright, as they return four starters, sophomores Chris Hansen and Matt O'Reilly, and juniors Justin Dunn and Andrew Zolitakis.

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