

Campolindo Starts NCS Run

By Brad Kvederis



Junior Annie Doyle had a great all-around effort in the win. Photos Gint Federas

After easily defeating John F. Kennedy High School in the first round of North Coast Section playoffs, top-seeded Campolindo survived a scare Nov. 16, holding off visiting Petaluma in four close sets to advance to the semifinals of the NCS volleyball championships. The DFAL champion Cougars, who had some big-game experience from playing several elite opponents this year, needed every bit of it to escape with the win, 25-23, 24-26, 25-23, 25-21.

Kelley Wirth (16 kills, 5 blocks) and Kenzie Brown (40 assists) turned in solid performances to help the Cougars overcome a slow start in which they trailed for most of the first set before scoring the final five points in a row, then dropped a tight second set that went to extra points. Head coach John Vuong said that playoff jitters cost his team early, in the form of shaky

passing and a few mental mistakes – but having the experience of playing in some high-profile tournaments "was a huge factor."

"We had played so many of these types of games before - the only difference is that in those tournaments, we have a second chance. Here, you don't have a second chance, and when that factor comes in, that's when the nerves start to quicken. But it helps a little bit," said Vuong.

The Cougars had a tough time with Petaluma's left-handed outside hitter, Alyssa McClure, who often hit right through the defense despite having two blockers assigned to her. But Campo's combination of Wirth, Emma Johnson (6 kills, 4 blocks), and Kirsten Sibley (7 kills, 1 block) eventually proved equal to the task as the Cougars closed out the third and fourth sets with strong net play and defense.

Utility player Annie Doyle recorded a great all-around effort with 4 aces, 8 kills, 5 digs, and 2 blocks on the night. Beyond the stat sheet, several acrobatic saves by Doyle and senior captain Natalie Menikitas kept Campo in the game at key moments and countered Petaluma's big hitters. Doyle said that while there is still some getting used to the high-pressure postseason games, she and the other underclassmen are enjoying their increased roles and like their chances of continuing on in the NCS bracket.

"We're definitely a younger team, and we definitely have a lot to improve on in the next two days for semifinals," Doyle said, "but I think we've got a chance (at winning the tournament)."

Campolindo next faces Tri-County Athletic League champion Albany (29-3, 10-0 TCAL) at 7 p.m. tonight, Nov. 20, in Moraga. Albany has lost only once since Sept. 14, and defeated Miramonte in straight sets Nov. 16.

Miramonte's season came to an end with the Albany loss, but not before the Matadors (15-11, 8-4) exceeded expectations for the year by finishing second in the DFAL and winning their first-round playoff game against Terra Linda. "This year was a phenomenal year for Miramonte. We played up to the potential we could have, and finished strong," said head coach Dave Masdeo.

Acalanes also saw its season end with a loss in its first-round NCS playoff game against Analy. The Dons (16-14, 7-5) finished tied for third in the DFAL.



Junior Kelley Wirth notched 16 kills.



Sophomore middle Emma Johnson had 6 kills and 4 blocks.

Coming Up: NCS Football, Round Two

By Michael Sakoda



Casey Harrington threw for four touchdowns in the Dons' win over Sonoma Valley. Photos Gint Federas

All three Lamorinda high school football teams will compete in the second round of the North Coast Section Championship playoffs this weekend.

Miramonte finished the season with an 8-2 record (5-1 DFAL), winning four straight to lock down the third seed in the Division II playoffs. In their first round game Nov. 16, the Mats put 20 points on the board in the third quarter to dismantle No. 14 Tennyson, 54-25.

"We knew we were in control after the second offensive play where we scored," said Mats' head coach Jack Schram, noting that his team has been playing very well offensively. Miramonte's red hot offense has scored 41 or more points in each of the games that followed their 38-10 loss to Campolindo on Oct. 4, dropping a combined 248 points on opponents during the winning streak.

The Mats will have the home field advantage when they meet No. 6 Northgate at 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 23 in Orinda.

Acalanes (8-3, 3-3 DFAL) wrapped up its season nicely, winning four straight after dropping three in a row to Campolindo, Las Lomas and Miramonte.

"We battled through a tough stretch in the league," said Dons' head coach Mike Ivankovich. "We had a lot of significant injuries, but we've been consistently improving ... and are healthy."

The Dons won their first playoff game since 2005 on Nov. 16, hammering No. 10 Sonoma Valley 49-10. A pair of touchdowns in the final two minutes of the first half gave the Dons a 35-10 advantage. "That really was the back-breaker for (Sonoma)," said Ivankovich, who described his team's offensive play as "pretty explosive."

Acalanes will not have to travel far this weekend as they take on the top-seed Campolindo Cougars in Moraga at 7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 22.

Campolindo finished the season a perfect 10-0 (6-0 DFAL) earning themselves a first round bye in the NCS Division III playoffs.

"It was probably the toughest 10-game season we've ever played," said Kevin Macy, the Cougars' head coach. "Of course a key to that success was Phillip Rei ... he really was a difference-maker."

Rei, the senior receiver, began the year at quarterback while starter Andrew Zolintakis recovered from an injury to his throwing arm. After resuming his usual role, Rei led the team with 557 receiving yards before tearing his ACL.

With several injured players, "We're in a tough place right now," Macy admitted.

The Cougars beat the Dons 24-14 during the regular season. Looking ahead to Friday's game Macy said, "Concern number one is stopping (Peter) Mitchell."

Both Macy and Ivankovich said there's no decided advantage to playing a familiar opponent.



Peter Mitchell ran for the Dons' first touchdown Nov. 15.



Brett Merrill caught three touchdown passes in the game and intercepted a Sonoma Valley long bomb to end the first half.

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Congratulations



Lamorinda Weekly would like to congratulate newlyweds Caitlin Rose Mitchell (née Graveson, our sports editor) and Jonathan Mitchell. The couple was married at Saint Mary's College on Nov. 16. We wish them a joyful life together.