

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Mats Avenge Loss, Defeat Cougars in NCS Finals

By Spencer Silva



Coach James Lathrop pulled by Tommy Baier
Photo Gint Federas

As time expired late Saturday afternoon, the Miramonte boys' water polo team, along with their fully-clothed coaches, jumped into the pool to commemorate their 10-8 victory over the No. 1 Campolindo Cougars.

It was a rematch of last year's final, where the Cougars scratched out an 11-10 victory over their cross-town rivals. This time around, the Mats led for most of the game, but it was their defense that ended up making the difference.

"Our defense and seniors really came up big," Miramonte coach James Lathrop said after the match. "Evan (Pauletich) was awesome. ... Jack Conner came off the bench and really provided a spark. It was the best team defense we played all year."

The Mats reached the final by comfortable defeats of California High and De La Salle in the early rounds, before beating Sir Francis Drake (San Anselmo) 10-7 in the semifinals.

In the championship, Campolindo was expected to employ their full press and counter-attack strategy. The Mats held the high-octane Campo attack to zero goals in the first quarter, although they broke through for five in the second.

Cal-bound senior Jordan Hoover scored four of the Mats' first five goals, carrying the team as he often has in

2014. It was apparent to the standing-room-only crowd from the beginning – including many of the Acalanes faithful - that this would be a tough match.

Senior Garrett Felix, one of Campo's best defenders, was tasked with guarding the powerful Hoover, but by halftime Felix was a foul away from leaving the game. He eventually fouled out, leading to a number of defensive mismatches.

The score was 6-5 at the half, but in the third quarter, Miramonte began to pull away as the Campo defense struggled. The Mats outscored the Cougars 3-1 in the quarter, swinging the score to 9-6 in their favor.

The game ended with a final score of 10-8.

The road to the NCS final match was paved in controversy for the Cougars. They won their first two NCS matches by a combined margin of 25 goals against Heritage and Monte Vista. On Nov. 12, they faced an upset-hungry Acalanes Dons team who looked poised for the win (see sidebar) and it wasn't until Nov. 14 that Campolindo's win was confirmed.

Before the championship match, Campolindo head coach Miles Price declined to specifically comment on the situation, but he said that he talked to Acalanes head coach Clarke Tamariki about the incident and there was "no bad blood" between the teams.

Acalanes (12-11) earned the No. 5 seed in the tournament and beat Washington and San Ramon Valley to reach the semifinals.

Lathrop reflected on how the semifinal controversy affected his team. "I think we benefited from the weird situation between Campo and Acalanes," he explained, "not because of the drama, but because we were able to concentrate on ourselves and our game-plan during practice because we didn't know who we were going to play."

Despite the tough loss in the championships, Price reflected on how far the Campolindo program has come. "Just a few years ago we weren't making it past quarter-finals. Now we've made it to the championship game two years in a row. We have a great pipeline and our program will continue to be strong."

The NCS crown is a nice bookend on what amounted to be an extremely successful season for the Mats.

The thrilling NCS Championship game had a shadow cast over it, unfortunately, by the events of the semifinal match between Acalanes and Campolindo.

On Nov. 12, with seconds left in the second overtime, Acalanes led Campo 11-10. They possessed the ball and were in a spread formation intent on running the clock out. However, with less than 10 seconds left, there was an errant pass thrown by an Acalanes player that led to a scrum for possession. Campolindo came away with the ball but time expired.

Acalanes began to celebrate in the pool, but after a conversation between Campo coach Miles Price and the referee crew, it was determined that Price had called a timeout before time was up. The referees decided to add five seconds to the clock and gave Campolindo the ball. Campo scored a game-tying goal in those final five seconds and went on to win the match 12-11 in the sudden-death third-overtime.

Misha Buchel, the Acalanes girls' water polo coach, who attended the game commented, "When time expired and they put five seconds on the clock, no one could believe it. I imagine (Campolindo) felt like they found a \$20 bill in their pockets. It was a remarkable night."

After the match, the referees were approached with video evidence and other accounts by parents, students and fans. Video footage showed possession was taken by Campo with less than two or three seconds remaining. Seemingly aware that they had added extra time to the clock, the referees deliberated and declared Acalanes the winner, 11-10.

On Thursday, the North Coast Section determined the game results under review. It was decided that Acalanes could not protest the result after continuing to play the final overtime. In an official statement released by the NCS, it declared that the protest had to be declared at the time of the incident – which would have been at the end of the second overtime. Also, according to the National Federation of High School (NFHS) rules, "judgment of the officials" is not something that can be protested.

In a phone interview, associate commissioner Karen Smith said, "The (referees) felt they'd made a mistake by reporting Acalanes as the winner. It's an unfortunate situation and I hope the focus gets back on what a great game it was rather than the controversy."

Neither coach from Acalanes nor Campolindo would comment on the situation.

Three-Peat!

Campo girls win NCS water polo title

By Spencer Silva

The Campolindo girls' water polo team has become one of Northern California's most dominant sports programs. On Nov. 15, they capped their brilliant season (25-3, 5-0) with a hard-fought 7-4 win over archrival Miramonte (18-8, 4-1), capturing their third consecutive Division II NCS title. They've now reached the finals in six consecutive seasons.

The Mats, who lost 12-6 and 12-7 to the Cougars during the season, drew up some special plans for the Cougars' high-powered offense. They committed to eliminating standout senior Hannah Buck, who didn't score until the fourth quarter. They also aimed to take advantage of exclusion penalties, something Campo is known to be liberal with since they have one of the best goalkeepers around, senior Madison Tagg, who is committed to play at Cal next fall.

Miramonte led the game 1-0 at the end of the first quarter, but in the second it was all Campolindo. Campo scored three unanswered goals, punctuated by a beautiful shot by senior Rachel Lewin, who led all scorers with three goals.

Campolindo led 4-2 heading into

the third quarter, and Miramonte went a man-up on a number of occasions, but it was unable to capitalize because of excellent defense from Tagg. With 1:53 left in the third quarter, Hailey Eberle scored Miramonte's last goal of the afternoon bringing the score to 6-4.

Heading into the fourth quarter, Campo's head coach Kim Everist ordered her girls out of the pool to offer some inspiration. When asked about the motivational speech, Everist laughed, "Motivation. That's a nice way of putting it. I felt like we were playing tight and tentative. I told them 'look to your right and look to your left and let's play like we have all season.'"

The speech worked and Campolindo scored once more to notch a 7-4 win.

Campolindo was thrilled with the win and its season. "This is the most successful senior class ever," Everist said in her post-game interview.

It's a bold statement, but a well-founded one. Just a few weeks ago, the Cougars defeated another local rival, the San Ramon Valley Wolves 7-5 to win the NorCal Championships, a tournament held at Sacred Heart every fall. With the victory, they

ended SRV's 52-game winning streak.

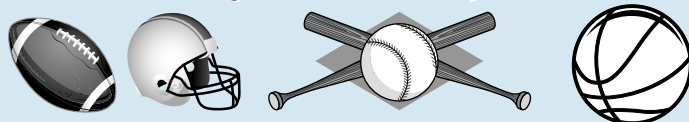
Winning the NorCal championship for the second time in three years was huge for the squad, but Everist was leery of the win.

"It's dangerous coming off a big NorCal win against SRV," she explained. "NCS is the important one. You can't win NorCal then not win NCS."

While the Lady Cougars came out on top, the Mats had plenty to be proud of. "We played our best game of the season," said first-year head coach Megan Calderazzo. The Mats had a great season and a strong play-off run, outscoring their opponents 38-1 (Concord High, Justin Sienna) in their first two NCS-tournament matches before playing Acalanes in the semifinals. They beat the Dons 10-7 after taking a 5-1 lead at the half.

Acalanes coach Misha Buchel is excited for the future of his team after a strong season (16-11, 2-3) "We're bringing the band back to together next year. This season was the appetizer," he added, "and if everyone commits to playing club and swimming in the spring, we're going to be primed for a big year next season."

Youth Sports Registration



Lamorinda Rugby Football Club



On-line Registration opens Oct 1st for the 2015 rugby season! Season runs December through March for youth, and through April for HS. All ages welcome. Girls welcome through age 11. No prior rugby experience necessary. Practices are located at the Wilder Fields in Orinda.

Find out more about our team and how to register online at www.lamorugby.com. For middle and elementary school ages, contact head youth coach Doug Pearson for more info: dpearson@lee-associates.com. For High School, contact Recruiting Director Steve Peterson at stevepetersonhome@yahoo.com.

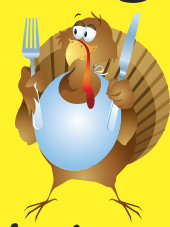


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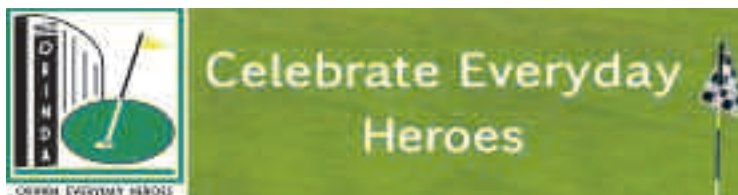
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