

Boys' Soccer Looks to Rebuild in Open DFAL

By Spencer Silva

The 2014-15 soccer season is underway and the landscape of the DFAL has changed considerably. The Lamorinda boys' soccer programs have lost key players and will look to rebuild.

Campolindo (4-2, 1-1-0 league) dominated the DFAL last fall, earning first place with a 9-0-3 record in league play. Their strong season earned them the No. 2 seed in the NCS tournament. They made it all the way to the semifinals before losing to eventual champions, Dublin High.

Much has changed in the past year, however, as the Cougars graduated 16 seniors and lost two of their best players in Ryan Donat and Preston Kilwien to the De Anza Force Academy. Donat was the DFAL's MVP during 2013-14 and led the team in scoring with nine goals. Playing for De Anza, Donat and Kilwien, both juniors, are ineligible to compete for a high school team.

The other key loss is Michael Samaniego, who will miss the season due to an injury. Samaniego was First Team All-League last season and was expected to be an important veteran presence and defensive force on the pitch.

"We lost 20 players from last year's team. That's unheard of in soccer," said coach Shane Carney of his fresh-faced team. "I believe we can still be a good this year, but it's going to take a lot of work."

The team returns just three starters from last year's squad: Seth Kofman, Jeremy Raine and Jacob Buchannan. Of his veterans, Carney intoned, "Their leadership will be important in bringing this team together and pushing the team to succeed."

The team is off to a strong start, only suffering losses to Livermore (5-0) and Dublin High (3-4-1). They also placed third in this year's Winter Soccer Classic defeating Albany last weekend 1-0.

Acalanes (2-3-1, 1-0-1) is also in

the process of adapting to new personnel. They graduated Kaj Simonsen, last season's DFAL offensive MVP. Eight of the team's 22 players are underclassmen, and it will be up to seniors Eric Sirott and Pat Ramm, both All-League selections last season, to lead the team into DFAL contention.

Coach Paul Curtis enters his 16th season at the helm of the program and emphasizes how every year it takes time for teams to meld together.

"Unlike other sports," he explained, "in high school soccer, the kids only play together for three months. They play on different teams throughout the year, so it takes some time getting comfortable with each other."

Despite a losing record, coach Curtis has a positive outlook on his team's progress.

"So far the team is learning how to work together," Curtis said, "We're developing the ability to attack consistently and learning how to possess the ball."

Miramonte (1-1-2, 1-1) had a tough 2013-14 season, finishing 4-7-5 (1-6-4 DFAL).

They graduated two of their best players in Kyle Visher and Ruwan Thilakaratne. The team has 11 new players, including three freshman and eight players promoted from last year's junior varsity squad. Reece Roberts and Joseph Wang, both All-League Honorable Mentions, return to the team.

In spite of the new faces, coach Billal Samy believes the team will be competitive throughout the season. "We're dealing with a new team dynamic," Samy explained, "but the returning core of the group will help expedite our collective form. We expect to be competitive."

Miramonte and Campolindo meet for the first time at Campolindo on Dec. 19. Acalanes hosts defending NCS champion Dublin on Dec. 17.



Acalanes

Photos Gint Fedaras



Campolindo



Miramonte

Acalanes Girls' Soccer Team Sets the Pace as Season Gets Underway

By Karl Buscheck

The girls' soccer season has only just begun, but the DFAL has an early frontrunner.

Acalanes is pouring in goals. Through the first five games the squad has found the back of the net on 30 occasions.

"They're taking chances and they're definitely clicking," said head coach Evan Sassano. "We have a lot of options, but playing together as a team is going to be the thing."

So far, the team's top option has been Katharine Torchio, who has racked up six strikes. The senior has helped lead the Dons, who own a 2-0-0 record in league (5-0-0 overall), to a share of first place in the DFAL standings.

On Dec. 10, Acalanes cruised past Las Lomas 4-1 to open league play with a big road win. The team followed up with a 1-0 away win over Dougherty Valley on Dec. 12. Torchio provided the game-winning goal in the second half.

It's been an impressive start for a team that went 0-4-8 in league a season ago. While Sassano cautions that it's still extremely early, he likes the direction his team is headed.

"Obviously, just like any other team I'm sure [our goal] is to win league and win the playoffs. This program hasn't won a championship yet, so we definitely think that's something to shoot for and something that we want to accomplish," he explained.

The **Miramonte** girls' team knows all about winning. Last year, the Mats rolled to a 10-1-1 record in league (15-3-1 overall). The squad claimed first place in DFAL.

This year, the team is 1-2-0 overall and tied for third place in league

with a 1-1-0 record. On Dec. 5, Miramonte lost 3-2 to Piedmont in the team's only non-league game of the season. Sophomore Mia Grillo and freshman Angeline Liu each scored a goal in the defeat.

The Mats dropped the first game of DFAL action, losing 3-0 at Alhambra on Dec. 10.

Miramonte bounced back from that defeat by going out on the road and shutting out Dublin 5-0 on Dec. 12. The Mats had four goals in a second-half onslaught and junior Cecilia Gee collected a hat trick.

Miramonte is slated to host **Campolindo** on Dec. 19 in the first rivalry matchup of the season. The game pits the top DFAL teams from a season ago against each other. Campolindo head coach Ernesto Silva knows that the clash with the Mats will be just one of many challenging tests that his team faces this season.

"I don't believe there will be one dominant team. Every game in our league will be tough," he said.

With a 1-1-0 record in DFAL (3-2-0 overall), Campolindo is tied with Miramonte for third place in the league standings. On Dec. 10, the Cougars won their first league game of the season, getting past Dublin 1-0. Senior AJ Morgan provided the decisive strike in the home win.

Campolindo then fell 1-0 at Alhambra in a road matchup on Dec. 12. Silva predicts an upswing for the Cougars as the team spends more time training and playing together.

"Given that we had very little time to prepare due to club commitments for several of our players, we have had some solid performances early on," he explained. "I believe we will continue to improve."



Acalanes

Photos Gint Fedaras



Campolindo

Submit stories to sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

(we prefer to receive your original photo file, minimum size: 200 dpi and 1200 pixels wide)