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Basketball Programs Look to Replace Graduated Talent

By Michael Sakoda



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Photo Gint Federas

Tough preseason competition is getting the Lamorinda schools ready for an even tougher road through the DFAL.

Campolindo went 23-8 last year (11-1 DFAL), won another league title, but were bounced in the semifinals of both the NCS playoffs and the CIF tournament.

This year, the Cougars are off to a 4-1 start, beating Redwood, Escondido and Sacramento. They lost to Montgomery.

The Cougars lost All-League performers Andrew Zolintakis and Justin Dunn to graduation and have lost would-be senior guard Matt O'Reilly to another school.

"They were great players, but the guys who were backing them up last year [are] ready to step into this," said head coach Matt Watson.

Center Chris Hansen looks to be a force in the DFAL, while fellow seniors, Scott Chen, Sean Smith, and Austin Clarke will be on All-League radar.

Having won four of the last seven DFAL titles, there is a bit of tradition at Campolindo, but Watson wants his guys focused on improving now to prepare them for another deep post-season run.

"Obviously we want to win the league title, but we're concerned with getting better weekly," said Watson. "We have a lot of tough games that we lined up to try and challenge our players early, so hopefully come March we're going to be playoff ready."

Acalanes finished last season 17-13 (5-7 DFAL) and were ousted by eventual champion, Bishop O'Dowd in the semifinals of the NCS playoffs. In the CIF tournament, they were upset 46-60 by Christian Brothers in the first round.

Off to a 0-4 start, the Dons have lost to Montgomery, Redwood, McClymonds and Drake. They will continue to face tough competition in St. Mary's of Stockton and Analy this preseason.

Standouts Buster Souza and Matt Thomas graduated last year, and this year's team returns only one starter, Joey Hewitt.

"It's a very light class," said head coach Dave Goldman simply.

The Dons are looking to some new faces this year, adding the football teams' quarterback Casey Harrington, track star Calvin Sariby, and Boston University committed baseball player Zach Stromberg to the starting lineup.

The team also returns reserves Alex Kinnear, Andrew McKendall, and Ryan Cheng.

"It will take a little time to build chemistry," said Goldman. "We're very, very inexperienced, but we're athletic; we'll defend aggressively, and we're trying to improve to the point where we can be competitive in league, and squeeze into NCS."

Miramonte notched an 18-13 record a year ago (6-6 DFAL), were bounced by Campolindo in the second round of the NCS playoffs, and

by eventual Nor-Cal Champion Drake in the semifinals of the CIF tournament.

The Mats lost their two best players to graduation, Drew Anderson and Joey Goodreault.

"The short answer is you don't replace players like Drew and Joey," said head coach Drew McDonald.

Anderson averaged 31.6 points, 18.3 rebounds per game during the team's CIF run, and Goodreault's ability as a playmaker and leader will be sorely missed. Forward Ray Clark, a leader on the team, also graduated last year.

Miramonte returns starters Jackson Wegener, who earned All-DFAL Honorable Mention last year, and Jake Linares, as well as key reserve Moneer Mujaddidi. Look for juniors Eddie Ionescu and Ryan Anderson, as well as sophomore Charlie Hawking to become factors as the season continues.

"With this group, where they end up is going to be in large part how

much they improve and come together as a team," said McDonald. "Hopefully by the time league comes we'll be ready to compete."

At 4-1, the Mats will wrap up the preseason in a few tournaments.



Jackson Wegener Photo provided

Girls Hoops Preview

Mats face tough competition, Dons improved

By Conrad Bassett



Photo Gint Federas

With the preseason well underway, the Lamorinda girls' basketball programs look ready for the DFAL season.

Last year, the **Mats** finished with a 30-2 record behind an experienced squad. This year, the Mats have to replace several key contributors, including the graduated Bree Alford, Alison Miller, and Megan Reid.

Head coach Kelly Sopak certainly has some outstanding players—the only senior and co-captain Kaitlin Fenn returns as do juniors Sabrina Ionescu, Keana Delos Santos, Jessica Wilson and Uriah Howard along with sophomore Rachelle Louie.

The Matadors are playing a challenging schedule. "We always try to put together a very competitive schedule. This season we are challenging ourselves at every turn in the non-league," Sopak said.

They won their first tournament of the season in Marin County beating perennial power St. Mary's in the final game.

The team traveled to Hawaii last week for the Nike Iolani Classic, where they lost their first game 63-62 against Konawaena (Hawaii) before defeating Shenzen (China) 74-62 and Roosevelt (Honolulu) 73-38.

Sopak is not as focused on wins and losses. "If we measure our success by wins and losses we might not have a successful season. ... However, if we measure our success on our improvement and where we eventually finish we just might have a highly successful season."

Over in Lafayette, the **Acalanes** Dons have already played extremely well under second-year varsity coach Chad Wellon. After struggling last year, finishing the season with an 11-15 record, the Dons are using their experience to improve. With a 6-0 start, the Dons are well on their way.

"Last year we had virtually no varsity experience so getting that year of experience under our belt has gone a long way in helping our team's confidence," Wellon said.

Wellon returns key players junior Julia Lyons and sophomores Emma Godfrey and Roni Marrone. Sophomore Brooke Panfili has transferred from Campolindo.

"Everyone on the team is contributing right now. We can go deep into our bench and get a lot of production," Wellon added.

The team's biggest win came in the championship game at the Lincoln Mustang Tournament in San Francisco against Amador Valley

(Pleasanton). Lyons was named the Most Valuable Player at that tournament. On Dec. 13, they won an overtime game at Sonoma Valley 48-47 with Godfrey scoring 21.

The Dons host the Lady Don Classic from Dec. 17-20, where they look to extend their win streak.

Art Thoms begins his second season at the helm at **Campolindo**. Campo went 17-12 a year ago with an 8-4 DFAL record.

"Kaylyn Murray is our lone returning starter and was an Honorable Mention All-League player last season," said Thoms. "We will rely on her to anchor the middle of court at center."

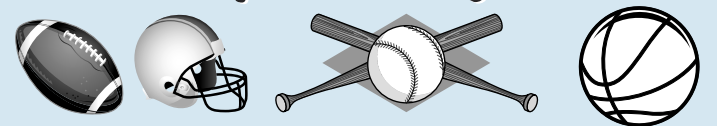
Thoms also expects senior Ashley Dubrasich to play a key role this season. "I have very high expectations for her this season," he explained.

The team has struggled early, losing four of their first five. However, Thoms has seen some significant improvement in their play, including wins in their last two games, one a 62-23 defeat of Drake.

Campolindo will face San Leandro and Oakland Tech before playing in the West Coast Jamboree.

All coaches agreed that the entire DFAL will be a solid league again this year. The DFAL begins on Jan. 6.

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.lamorigby.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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