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Dons Roll Mats to Keep Top Spot in DFAL

By Karl Buscheck



Caroline Clark scored for the Dons. Photos
Gint Federas

With the postseason looming, the Acalanes girls' soccer team is rolling through the DFAL.

"We're feeling really good," said Acalanes head coach Evan Sassano, whose team owns a share of the lead in the DFAL standings with a 4-1-0 record in league (10-1-0 overall). "We're coming together as a team and playing the way we want to play."

It's been a remarkable run for a squad that went 0-4-8 in league a season ago. On Jan. 7, Acalanes clashed with Miramonte, topping its neighbor 5-3 in a back-and-forth affair.

"These are games that we get up," said Sassano. "We took it as a good challenge for us, and we saw that after we won that we feel we can compete with anyone."

On a cold night at Acalanes, the Mats, whose record stands at 2-2-1 in league (6-3-2 overall), didn't waste any time getting on the board. In the opening minutes of the game, Miramonte claimed a 1-0 edge courtesy of junior Cecilia Gee.

Acalanes then poured in three unanswered goals to take a 3-1 lead into the half. As the second half got underway, the Mats stormed back into the

game. Ten minutes in, freshman Angeline Liu cut the deficit to one goal, as she scored on a deflected shot.

It only took Miramonte five minutes to find the equalizer. With the Mats' attack pushing forward, Gee made a quick turn 30 yards from the goal and sent a laser of a shot into the upper right corner of the net to tie the game at 3-3.

After the Dons watched their two-goal lead vanish, the team regained the momentum in the final third of the game. With 12 minutes to go, senior Caroline Clark provided the go-ahead strike on a penalty kick.

The goal was Clark's 12th of the season, making her the leading scorer in the DFAL. Senior Katharine Torchio then sealed the win for the Dons. With three minutes to go, Torchio was left unmarked on a fast break and crashed in her second goal of the contest.

Sassano was impressed with the way his team continued to battle after Miramonte's furious second-half charge.

"We knew that we needed to be resilient," he said. "We knew that we had to be strong mentally, that it's not going to be an easy game. So, we kept going and we showed that we can finish a game out."

Up next for Acalanes is another rivalry matchup as the team visits Campolindo on Jan. 14. With a 2-1-1 record in league (5-3-1 overall), the Cougars sit in third place in the DFAL and are right in the mix for the top spot.

After winning back-to-back games, Campolindo is trending in the right direction as the end of the season approaches. On Jan. 9, the squad hosted Dougherty Valley, edging past the league opponent 1-0. On Jan. 6, the Cougars also beat Piedmont by the same score line in a non-conference matchup. Senior AJ Morgan provided the winning goal and now leads the team with seven strikes on the season.



Angeline Liu scored a goal for the Mats.



Katharine Torchio's goal sealed the 5-3 win for the Dons.

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[back](#)

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