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## Lamorinda Teams Set to Square Off with Playoff Hopes in the Balance

By Spencer Silva



Joey Hewitt

Nearly three-quarters of the high school basketball season is in the books and the playoff picture is coming into focus. Campolindo (15-2) is putting the finishing touches on another brilliant season - they're regarded as one of the best teams in the Bay Area. Acalanes (5-13) and Miramonte (10-9) have less certain paths. Both teams have losing records against D-III schools, and they'll need a number of key wins against D-III opponents. Both teams need upset wins over titan Campolindo.

Campo owns a 10-game win streak and Miramonte's recent defeat of second-place Dublin High places Campo firmly in the DFAL's driver seat. Head coach Matt Watson, however, believes his team's best basketball is yet to be played. "We have a couple of football guys that are just getting adjusted," he explained. "We are hoping to hit our stride in the middle of February."

The Cougars will be tested over the next few weeks with a slate of games against second-place Dublin, then Acalanes and Miramonte. "In high school, any team can win, especially in rivalry games," Watson said of the upcoming games. "Acalanes and Miramonte are well coached, play extremely hard and have tremendous fan support, which makes both of them difficult to beat, especially on the road."

In spite of the Dons losing record, they can still qualify for the NCS Division III playoffs by closing the season with wins over Campolindo, Miramonte and Alhambra. The Dons have played a tough schedule, and while it won't be easy qualifying for NCS, one of their five wins came against a strong Liberty High School team, helping their case for an NCS bid.

The Acalanes Dons had a crucial double-overtime win over the Alhambra Bulldogs on Jan. 23. The win was highlighted by an impressive 37-point performance from senior guard Joey Hewitt. Hewitt is the team's offensive leader, averaging more than 20 points per game.

If the name Casey Harrington sounds familiar, it's probably because he started as quarterback for the Dons last fall. He didn't play basketball his junior season, but he has used his raw athleticism to become one of the team's most valuable assets on the court.

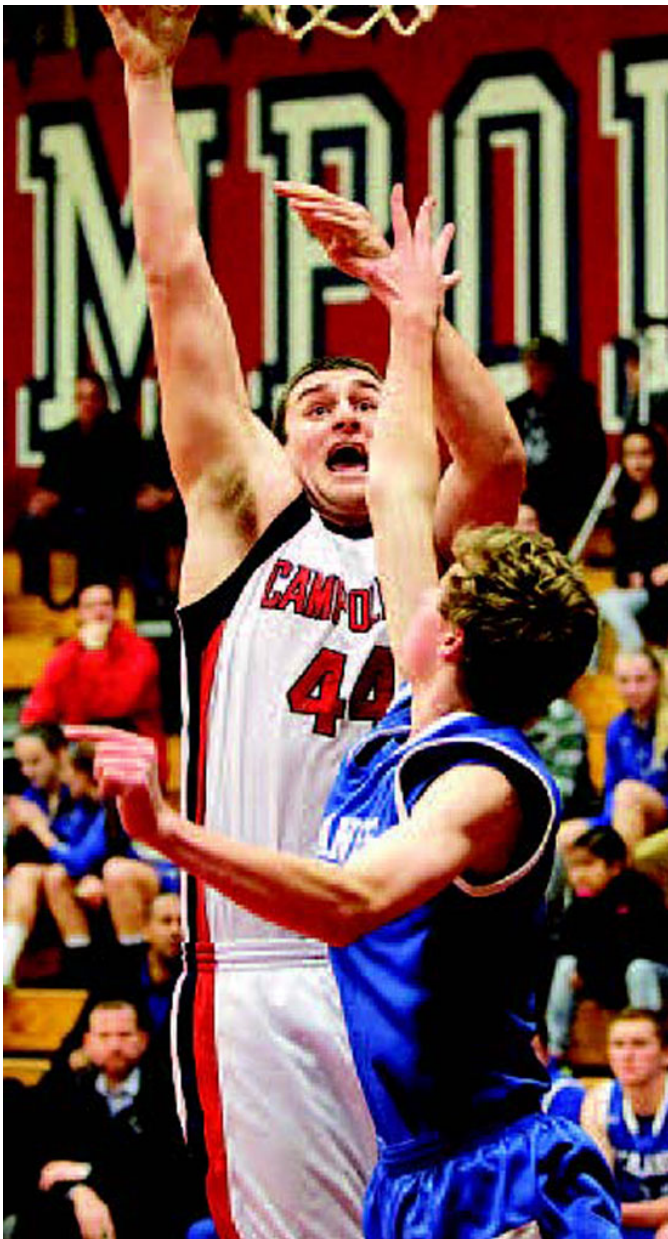
It's been a process getting all the new faces on the same page, but the formula hasn't changed much, according to head coach Dave Goldman. "We've focused on defensive intensity and running our offense," he said. "We don't score a lot of points, so we like to slow the game down and try to keep (our opponents) in the 50s."

Miramonte reached the NorCal semifinals for the first time in school history last winter, but they're going to need good fortune to repeat. They have two games left against league-leading Campolindo. If the rivalry weren't in and of itself enough, the Mats need to win at least one of those games to qualify for the playoffs. Campo's only league loss last season came at the hands of the Mats, so it's safe to say there will be no charity when the two teams meet.

Miramonte's up-tempo offense has buoyed the team all season. Seniors Jackson Wegener, Jake Linares and Moneer Mujaddidi engineer it. Head coach Drew McDonald spoke of the three captains' invaluable "experience and presence" on and off the court. He sees the underclassmen coming along too.

The Mats have struggled in league play, but their win over second-place Dublin on Jan. 23 could be the boost they needed. "We're struggling right now," McDonald explained before Friday's win. "We came into league play with a winning record, and we've known that we have to get better as the season goes along."

The Mats look to get back to their winning ways against Las Lomas before taking on Campolindo on Jan. 31.



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