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All In

By Conrad Bassett



Sabrina Ionescu Photo Gint Federas

The Diablo Foothill Athletic League girls' basketball season finished last week and the NCS playoffs began last night. All three Lamorinda girls' programs earned playoff spots.

Miramonte completed their DFAL season on Feb. 18, beating Campolindo 76-26. With the win, the Mats recorded a perfect 12-0 DFAL record and improved to 24-2 overall. The combination of winning the DFAL championship along with a strong showing in difficult non-league games earned the Mats the No. 1 seed in the NCS Division III tournament.

Miramonte is predicted to reach the finals. Rival Campolindo head coach Art Thoms pointed to the Mats' star player Sabrina Ionescu as the key to their success. "Miramonte is the heavy favorite in the bracket," Thoms explained. "Sabrina Ionescu is the best player I have ever seen in girls' high school basketball."

On Feb. 24, they hosted No. 16 Del Norte (Crescent City).

The third place Acalanes Dons finished the regular season with an outstanding 20-6 record (7-5 DFAL) and captured the No. 3 seed and a home game against San Rafael in the first round.

"The girls are very excited to be part of NCS this year after falling short last year of a post season berth," said head coach Chad Wellon.

Wellon pointed to the team's chemistry and focused energy as reasons for the team's success. "We have a very close group and there isn't much concern with stats on this team," he explained. "Everyone just has a common goal to play as hard as they can in order for the team to be successful."

After a solid regular season, Wellon is very happy with how his team has improved throughout the year. "I felt we ended the season on a really positive note with three consecutive wins in the DFAL. The playoffs should be a lot of fun," he added.

Right behind Acalanes, Campolindo finished tied for fourth in the DFAL with a 5-7 record. The Cougars' 13-13 overall record put them in the top half of the NCS bracket at the No. 8 spot. They hosted No. 9 Petaluma on Feb. 24.

Thoms also pointed to the continued improvement of his team this year. "Our late season success has come from our two distinct groupings. The starters are a more deliberate and a physical group," noted Thoms. "They run plays well and don't give up easy baskets."

Thoms specifically pointed to the leadership of junior Emily Lyall and senior Julie Meng. He also noted that the long season has helped the freshmen adapt.

"They are followed by five freshmen who press, fast break and fly around the court," he explained. "The freshmen led the comeback from 13 points down in our must win game against Dougherty Valley."

The division III bracket is competitive again this year. In addition to Miramonte, Bishop O'Dowd (18-8) has the No. 2 seed. A year ago, Bishop O'Dowd was excluded from the NCS and NorCal playoffs for having played an extra game during the season. The Dragons have won 15 of

their last 16 and are anxious to return to the championship game-they won the title five years in a row, from 2009 through 2013.



Roni Marrone



Emily Lyall

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