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Campolindo to NCS Semifinals, Miramonte Knocked Out

By Karl Buscheck



Jeremy Raine Photo Gint Federas

Campolindo's boys' soccer team has advanced to the semifinals of the NCS Division II Soccer Championship. The other program to qualify for the playoffs, Miramonte, lost in the opening round.

The NCS Championship almost came to a quick end for Campolindo. On Feb. 18, the Cougars (10-1-1), overcame an early 2-1 deficit to get past Concord 4-2 thanks to a hat trick from senior Jeremy Raine.

Raine handed Campolindo a 1-0 edge just five minutes into the game, as he headed home off of a corner kick. However, Concord answered back quickly, pouring in a pair of goals in the next 15 minutes.

"Honestly there was a bit of nerves on the bench," said head coach Shane Carney after his team went into the locker room down 2-1. "Even though we've had a good season, we're still really young and an inexperienced team."

A quick talk got the Cougars back on track. "Half time was a nice way to kind of sit down and talk with the boys, get the nerves calmed down and just get them focused on working hard, which I think was really the difference," Carney explained. "We didn't change much between the first half and the second half, the guys just stepped it up and worked harder."

As Carney noted, the plan for the final 40 minutes was simple: "At halftime, we said the goal was to win the second half 3-0. So we went out and did it."

The Cougars dominated possession early on

after the break, and in the 54th minute senior Sam Larson crashed in the deflection off a free kick to level the score at 2-2. In the 71st minute, Raine gave Campolindo the lead as he dragged his shot just inside the right post. Just two minutes later, Raine sealed the win and completed his hat trick with a close-range shot.

In the quarterfinals, the Cougars needed an extra-time strike from senior Skip Buchanan to beat Ygnacio Valley 2-1 on Feb. 21. Senior Seth Kofman supplied Campolindo's first goal, connecting on a penalty kick in the 23rd minute.

Up next for Campolindo will be a trip to face No. 1 Richmond on Feb. 25.

In the opening round, the Mats, who were the No. 14 seed, lost 2-0 to the No. 3 seed De Anza on Feb. 18. Even though the Mats ended up on the wrong side of the score line, head coach Billal Samy praised the team's performance.

"[They] were not too afraid of the top-ranked seeds. They have a fighting mentality, they always want to compete. For us, it didn't matter who we played. We felt that we could compete with any of these teams and on any given day we could get the result."

Against De Anza, it was a couple of second-half strikes from the home team that determined the result.

"In the end, I think we gave up two goals that should have been better handled by our defense, but that's the way the game is," said Samy.

For the Mats, the 2014-15 season was the program's most successful campaign in nearly a decade. "We made a huge accomplishment in getting to the playoffs for the first time after eight years," said Samy, whose team landed in third place in the DFAL standings after going 5-3-4. "It was quite the achievement for the players."



Sam Larson

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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