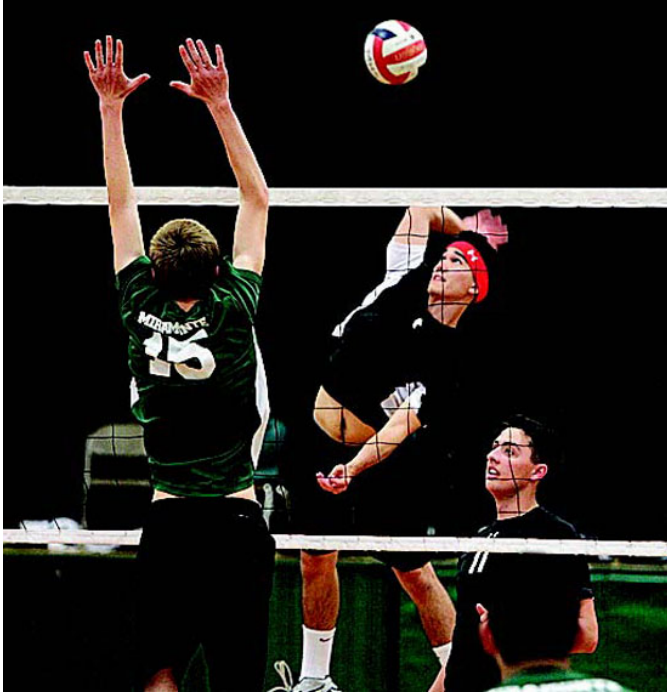


Published May 6th, 2015

Campolindo Boys' Volleyball Continues Reign Over DFAL

By Spencer Silva



Campolindo's Ryan First at the net with Jack Eisner, right. Photo Gint Federas

The Campolindo Cougars boys' volleyball team extended their winning streak to 23 April 29, defeating the Miramonte Mats in straight sets, 25-14, 25-13, 25-15.

The Cougars (24-2 overall, 8-0 DFAL), fresh from winning the prestigious Granite Bay Tournament, glided through the first two sets, routinely setting up kills on three passes and playing tight defense.

The Mats woke up in the third period, engaging the Cougars in a series of long rallies, but it was too little, too late. Cougars senior Ryan First quelled the Mats' rebellion, ending the match emphatically with two consecutive aces.

"We warm up a little slower than other teams," said Mats coach Lisa Bachtold of the late surge.

Team captains Michael Strandring and Joe Worsley, along with First, highlight an impressive and accomplished senior class for Campo. They've won three straight Division II NCS championships, as well as two consecutive NorCal titles. (The NorCal tournament for volleyball is only two years

old.)

"This group, as freshman, really reestablished the program," explained Campolindo head coach David Chen. "And each of them is the stud player on their club team. We just try to keep them humbled and balanced."

The team is preparing for a deep playoff run, and at 8-0 in league, they're poised to capture yet another DFAL title.

"We're starting to play good, disciplined volleyball," Chen said. "We always want to get the quick kill ... but sometimes keeping the ball in play is good, so we can play defense, which helps us out a lot. Our strengths are our defense and ball control."

The Mats (5-7 overall, 1-6 DFAL) went 4-1 in pre-season play, but the loss to Campo now marks its seventh in eight games. They opened league play with a heartbreaking five-set loss to Alhambra (Martinez), which functioned as a wake-up call for Bachtold and the Mats. "We realized teams are getting better, and, looking at our team, we realized we need to catch guys up and get them ready a lot faster."

The Mats have struggled to persuade kids to enter their program. Only three players play offseason volleyball, and two of them are captains: juniors Mitchell Tang and Mitch Brooks. The team hasn't played in any tournaments this season, which has limited their ability to develop the skills of players new to the sport.

The Mats played their best match of the season the week after losing to Alhambra. They took a set from the Cougars, and, to date, are the only team to have done so in the DFAL. "We didn't have any expectations," Bachtold said. "We started making plays and things clicked."

The Acalanes Dons (1-13, 0-7 DFAL) sit in last place in the DFAL. They've been better than their record suggests, losing a number of close matches. The team returned just four players from last year, does not have a single senior and has only a handful of kids who played the sport prior to the season.

The team's captain, setter, and best player is Tommy Graham. He's been consistent all year and is poised to lead the team to better days. Joey Moran has also stepped up, "imbuing" his teammates with "enthusiasm and energy," per Head Coach Mason Mulvaney. In spite of the bleak 2015 season, Mulvaney envisions a bright future for his program.

"Our expectation is to be one of the top teams in the league next year and make the NCS playoff," he noted. "It would be a huge jump, but I think this group of guys will put in the work needed to succeed."

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA