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Acalanes LAX Advances to NCS Semifinals

Mats, Cougars qualify for NCS

By Karl Buscheck



Acalanes senior Adrian Jeffries

Photos Gint Federas

After storming through the DFAL with a perfect 12-0 record, the Acalanes boys' lacrosse team is looking to win its second NCS title in three seasons.

"Our senior class has played in two consecutive championship games and they're a real big reason that we got to where we are," said head coach Brent Ringwood.

As the Dons aim for another NCS banner, the team will be relying heavily on seniors Adrian Jeffries and Vinny Gladden along with junior Brian Maiken.

"Everybody's really stepped up, but those three guys are very exceptional players," said Ringwood.

The league champs earned the No. 1 seed in the Division II playoffs and had a bye in the opening round before taking down Campolindo at home on May 15.

"Overall, the effort was there the whole time, but in the second half, things really got rolling and we got some good looks," said Ringwood after the Dons topped the Cougars 13-6.

Next up on the docket is another

clash with No. 4 seed Marin Academy on May 20 in the semifinals. Acalanes edged past Marin Academy 11-10 at the end of March in San Rafael.

"Anytime you play a team multiple times, you end up having to beat them in different ways," said Ringwood. "The last time we played them it was a double overtime win, so we have to figure something new because it's definitely not going to be the same thing twice."

For Campolindo, the loss to Acalanes in the quarterfinals brought to an end a historically successful campaign. The Cougars landed in second place in the DFAL standings with a 9-2 record; their only losses came against the Dons.

Campolindo swept past Miramonte and also hosted its first NCS game since 2008. Plus, Campolindo earned its first-ever NCS win, knocking off Bishop O'Dowd 14-8 in the opening round of the playoffs on May 13 in Moraga.

Head coach Mitchel Frey gave all the credit to his players: "The success goes hand in hand to the amount of work and effort that our kids put in and I couldn't

be prouder of our group of kids."

Like the young Cougars, the Mats are another youthful team on the rise. Miramonte placed fourth in the league standings with a 6-6 record, earning the No. 12 seed in the NCS postseason. On May 13, the Mats nearly upset the No. 5 seed Novato on the road.

"We were aiming to make it past the first round," said head coach John Hofinga after his team lost 8-7. "We played a very good game. It was a one-goal game, back-and-forth the whole time and the guys played hard and I was proud of the way the team came together and really showed up

to play in that last game, but we definitely could have won that game."

A quartet of senior captains—Sam Essabhoy, Spencer Hardwick, Josh Chen and Sam Tuttle—anchored the Mats in 2015, but the future looks promising thanks to an array of re-emerging stars.

"I think that was the key part—especially as the program continues to grow. If we get those younger guys to keep coming in year after year, it really builds a good foundation," said Hofinga. "We have that chemistry on and off the field and that translates to success on the field."



Miramonte senior Sam Essabhoy



Kannah Cruickihank, Campolindo

Acalanes and Miramonte Lacrosse Teams Cruise in NCS

Cougars fall in quarterfinals

By Karl Buscheck



Ellie Higgins, Acalanes



Sophia Hubbell, Campolindo

Photo Gint Federas

The Acalanes and Miramonte girls' lacrosse teams both advanced to the NCS semifinals thanks to decisive victories on May 15.

The Dons, who landed the No. 2 seed in the Division II playoffs after ripping off a 12-0 record in league action, carved up Justin-Siena 17-5 in the quarterfinals. The key to success

for the DFAL winners all season has been that squad doesn't have to count on any given player.

"One of the greatest things about this season's team is that we have a huge team, but every single player is capable of being an impact player," said head coach Katie Mitchell. "We don't have the superstars that the pro-

gram has had in the past, but every girl is a very strong player. It's nice having a deep team and being able to rely on everyone on the team."

That depth was needed, as Acalanes faced off against the No. 3 seed S.F. University in the semifinals on May 19 in Lafayette. For the Dons, it's all about being mentally prepared.

"I think it's a mental game," said Mitchell. "We've worked really hard and improved a lot over the season and it's anybody's game when you step onto the field. So, I think it's just who can execute the best. Hopefully we'll come in mentally ready."

The Mats also ran up against a big-time opponent, as Miramonte traveled to Piedmont to battle with the No. 1 seed in the semifinals on May 19. The Mats advanced to that stage after dispatching their neighbor Campolindo 19-10 at home on May 15. The win marked the second time that the Mats had topped the Cougars in less than a month.

Miramonte also beat Campolindo on April 28 in what proved to be a crucial contest for both squads. Thanks in part to that win, the 9-3 Mats hung onto the second spot in the DFAL standings while the Cougars dropped into third place. As a result, the No. 4 seed Mats got to host the

No. 5 seed Cougars in the NCS showdown.

For the Cougars, senior Mary Hildeburn was the star throughout 2015 season.

"She's just one of the best players in the entire league who all the girls on the team look up to," said head coach Jessica Hoffschneider.

Campolindo also has a slew of talented young players like sophomores Peyton King and Grace Burnite who provide plenty of optimism for the 2016 season and beyond.

"We have some sophomore players who are first-time varsity players and who have really impressed us and become some of the best players on the team," said Hoffschneider. "So, what's been great for us and for the future of the program is to see some of these younger players who we weren't expecting much out of really step it up."

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