

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Lamorinda Baseball Teams Compete in NCS

By Spencer Silva



Zach Stromberg



Connor Jackson

Photos Gint Federas

All three Lamorinda baseball teams qualified for the NCS tournament, but, after the second round, all three teams had been eliminated from their respective tournaments — Miramonte and Acalanes in Division III, Campo in Division II.

No. 1 seed Acalanes (17-9) won its first round game against Ygnacio Valley on May 26 by an 11-run margin. Dons ace Zach Stromberg threw five scoreless innings. In the second round on May 29, however, they suffered an upset loss to No. 8 seed Albany High. The 3-0 loss was the first time they were shutout all season.

The season, overall, was a big success for Acalanes. They won their last six games of the regular season, including a hard-fought 3-2 win over rival Campolindo for the DFAL title on May 23. With most of his starters returning, head coach Justin Santich-Hughes expects his team to be even better next season.

“Jake Berry and Tommy Henderson will set the tone for us in the lineup next year for what will be the most talented offensive club I’ve ever had,” he pointed out.

In the first round, No. 7 seed Miramonte (15-12) hosted No. 10 seed Del Norte High (Crescent City) and beat them by a score of 9-4. The Warriors jumped out to a 1-0 lead after an

error and an RBI double in the first inning, but Mats pitcher, Cal-commit Connor Jackson, limited the damage, holding the opposition scoreless for the next five innings. He allowed no earned runs on four hits with 10 strikeouts and two walks.

“In the first inning, if I give up one run, it’s not going to be a huge deal in the long run,” Jackson said. “I was really working on limiting the damage and knew my team would come up and score some runs.”

He was right. In the bottom of the fifth inning, junior Jarret Perches kicked off a three-run rally with a leadoff walk. Then, in the bottom of the sixth, the Mats collected six runs on five hits, giving them a 9-1 lead.

In the second round, the Mats were shut out by No. 2 seed San Marin, losing by a final score of 9-0. They were plagued by errors — only four of the nine runs allowed were earned — and managed just two hits.

Despite the tough loss, the Miramonte program is healthy. They won 15 games and will return 12 players, including starting pitchers Jackson and fellow junior James Vaccaro, who’s committed to USC.

“We’ve been in the playoffs the last 15 out of 16 years and we’ve won six NCS titles,” explained coach

Vince Dell’Aquila. “You don’t do that unless you have players that just buy in and just keep on, year-in, year-out, passing the torch.”

In the Division II playoffs, No. 13 seed Campolindo (15-10) was shut out by No. 4 seed Casa Grande in its first and only game on May 26. Campolindo faced Casa Grande in last year’s tournament as well.

“We were pretty excited for the game against Casa Grande because of the rivalry that comes along with it,” said senior pitcher Jake Rider.

For the second year in a row, the Gauchos eliminated the Cougars. This time, it was a three-run homer by Casey Longaker in the first inning that sealed their fate.

The Cougars had an up-and-down season under first-year coach Wayne Franklin. They started the season 4-2, but then, after a four game skid, the team went on to win 11 of its last 13 games. The Cougars will return a number of key players, including Cal-commit Max Flower and ace starter Cole Farrand — who won nine games in 2015.

“It seemed like we flipped a switch. It was like we decided enough is enough,” said Franklin. “I’d like to see that continuity for years to come. That’s how you build a winning program.”

Miramonte Girls’ Lacrosse NCS Champions

The Miramonte girls’ lacrosse program accomplished a new goal: After finishing the season in second place in the DFAL, the Miramonte Matadors earned the No. 4 seed in the NCS playoffs. The Mats turned that No. 4 seed into a No. 1 finish, beating S.F. University 13-10 in the final match to win their first-ever NCS championship.

Miramonte traveled to Kezar Stadium in San Francisco to face off against the No. 3 seed on May 21. Senior Caroline Tague led the charge for the Mats, scoring seven goals in the contest. Miramonte took an 8-6 lead into the halftime break, and a quick goal by University cut the lead to one. Tague answered back with a quick goal of her own to put an end to any comeback. The Mats continued to build their lead, stretching the lead to 13-9 with around five minutes to play. Miramonte gave up one more goal but held on to win the title 13-10.

The Mats began the tournament with a first round bye. They faced crosstown rivals, Campolindo, in the second round. The Cougars finished in third place in the DFAL and earned

a No. 5 seed. While they split the series during regular season play, the Mats entered the postseason with a renewed focus and a singular goal.

They knocked off the Cougars 19-10. In the semifinals, Miramonte took down Piedmont 12-8.

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