

Published September 9th, 2015

## Water Polo: Lamorinda to Pac-12 Pipeline Strong as Ever

By Emily Dugdale



Jordan Hoover Photo Gint Federas

players who swam on the same swim team with them, or who have coached with our club."

Lathrop, a Cal water polo alumni (1997-2000), has coached many players who have gone on to shine at the next level. Cal men's head coach Kirk Everist heaped praise on the job local coaches have done.

"It really helps when you have coaches that have played at a high level - James at Cal, Miles [Price, head coach for Campolindo] at Santa Barbara - and it's great to have these high-level coaches in the area to help develop these kids at a young age," Everist said.

According to Everist, the unique edge Lamorinda brings to the college recruiting eye is the area's strong tradition of recreational swimming. By a young age, "pretty much everyone in the area is a swimmer. I would assume that the quarterback at Miramonte swam on a rec team at some point," he said. As kids get older, water polo often becomes an enticing sport because, perhaps, it combines the contact of more mainstream sports like football or soccer, but the setting is more familiar: the swimming pool.

Everist, a Miramonte grad, has plenty of personal experience with the culture of aquatic sports in the area. "It's almost impossible to navigate life in Lamorinda without being part of the rec swimming culture," he said.

The Cal men ranked third in the Collegiate Water Polo Association's preseason poll. UCLA was first, followed by USC in second.

Patrick Fellner (Miramonte), now a junior, should be a factor for UCLA this fall. He was 7th on the team in goals in 2014 with 22, including a goal in each of the NCAA's Championship matches.

Drew Holland (Miramonte) will look to continue his success in the cage this fall at Stanford. In 2014, Holland was an ACWPC Third Team All-American, making 267 saves in 102 quarters. Other former Miramonte players include Kyle Weikert and Charlie Wiser, also Stanford juniors.

Charlie Rogers (Acalanes), will kick off his freshman season at USC and compete for reps in the cage.

After leading the Matadors to an NCS Championship over the Cougars, Miramonte's Jordan Hoover joins former NCS rivals Spencer Tagg and Felix Garrett at Cal this fall. As if that wasn't enough Cougar, he also joins former Campo great J.D. Ratchford (Class of 2013). Former Acalanes stars Connor Reid (Class of 2013) and Andrew Schnugg (Class of 2012) are also playing for the

Summer may be cooling off, but the pools are just starting to heat up.

Men's Pac-12 water polo has begun and many of its best teams are packed with talent from the Lamorinda area. Local standouts can be found on the rosters of University of California, Berkeley (Cal) Arizona State, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the University of Southern California (USC) and Stanford. The men's season runs through the fall, and the women's team will start in the spring of 2016.

"Especially with Cal, but with a lot of the college programs, they're recruiting out of an area with a strong tradition of water polo," Miramonte Head Coach James Lathrop said. "It's pretty fun within the water polo community to see all of these local players compete at a higher level. Especially for the younger kids to get to watch some of the

Golden Bears this fall.

Ratchford scored 26 goals last year as a red-shirt freshman, ranking sixth on the team. Also a red-shirt freshman, Reid scored five goals in 2014. Schnugg appeared in six matches and scored four goals.

Both Reid and Schnugg are legacy players. Reid's father, Patrick, aided Cal in securing NCAA titles in 1984 and 1987. Schnugg's brother Ryan and father John played Cal water polo from 2008-2011 and 1977-80, respectively.

Speaking to the relationship between the three major high schools in Lamorinda, Ratchford said that the "good competition" between their water polo teams develops the player's skills to "reach their full potential" and go on to play at a collegiate level. "The big influence on swimming at a young age in the area translates to a lot of good athletes who end up getting into watersports and sticking with them," he added.

Reid and Ratchford recently made Cal's first travel trip team to the Triton Invitational hosted by the University of California, San Diego. The Cal men finished out their first matches of the season with wins over No. 5 Pacific and Cal Baptist (a game in which Ratchford scored a goal) at the two-day tournament from Sept. 5-6.

"They're both excited," Everist said of the two players the week before the competition. "It's a great accomplishment to make the first travel team in the beginning of the year. We're expecting some big things from them." Games will be televised on the Pac-12 network this fall.

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[back](#)

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