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## Girls Soccer Teams Battle in Wide-Open DFAL

By Emily Dugdale



Acalanes' Regan McQuain (13) and Campo's Kaylee Johns (10) fight for possession  
Photos Gint Federas

Sassano remains hopeful his girls could bring home the program's first NCS championship.

"The girls are working hard to build their chemistry and we have high expectations for ourselves," Sassano explained. "We still have yet to reach our potential, but the good thing about this group is that we have a very high ceiling."

Campo head coach Ernesto Silva also has a different look to his team this season. In past years, an estimated 90 percent of the players were members of the Lamorinda Soccer Club. This season, the Cougars feature players from more than five local clubs.

"This makes the process of gelling and establishing a system of play a bit more challenging," Silva said.

The Cougar's 4-5-1 record is reflective of its inconsistency thus far. Silva says it's been a "mixed bag" of performances and "not-so-good" teamwork. However, he's not worried. "I like that with every game, we improve," he said.

Returning key players include senior defender Jessie Mano along with three powerhouse midfielders: seniors Bailey Yuen, Danielle Brown and junior Melissa Wilson.

Silva noted the relative parity amongst DFAL programs this winter, but thinks his team will stick around until the end. "Trying to predict a possible league champion is tough. However, I believe we will be in the mix."

Last season, Miramonte clinched the 2015 NCS Championship, beating the Cougars with an 80th-minute goal from Gina Crosetti. Longtime head coach Mohamed Mohamed has stepped down, however, passing the torch to Matt Daus. His goal: win another NCS championship. "The pressure is on for a repeat," Daus said.

Girls' soccer is in full swing, and the pitch is heating up fast as the Lamorinda neighbors battle each other on the road to NCS. Campolindo, Acalanes and Miramonte entered league play last month, and each team features a different look than last winter.

"As always, the DFAL is the strongest league," Acalanes head coach Evan Sassano remarked. "There are no easy games."

At Acalanes, it's a new team, but the program's culture remains the same. "We like to play an attacking style of soccer that is fun to watch, and hard to stop," Sassano said.

The Dons sit at 3-0-2 overall with a team that includes talented Navy-bound seniors Reagan McQuain and Lexie Silva. Though the team has been plagued by injuries and other absences,

The Matadors are well into league play and currently own a 3-3-2 record. "I think we are just now starting to hit our stride," Daus said.

"Luckily, the transition of the program from last year to this year was completely smooth and natural and the girls were completely bought in from the beginning," he said.

This year's team boasts a strong senior class held down by co-captains Crosetti - committed to the University of Kentucky - and Kelly McKeen.

"After you win something you have a huge target on your back and everyone is going to give their best shot because they want to try to knock off the defending champion."



Acalanes' Emily Smith (2) and Campo's Melissa Wilson (9) contest a header.

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