

LAMORINDA SPORTS



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Mats Hunt for DFAL Title, Cougars and Dons in NCS Mix

By Karl Buscheck



Eddy Ionescu (4) and Madison Young (24)

Miramonte dished out some revenge against Campolindo on Feb. 2, claiming round two of the rivalry matchup 60-48. The victory also positioned the Mats to make a play for the DFAL boys basketball crown.

After beating their neighbors in Orinda, the Mats topped Alhambra 65-49 at home on Feb. 5 and have now reeled off four consecutive wins.

"I think that we're taking some strides towards being the best team

that we can and I think that we've gotten stronger as the season's progressed," head coach Drew McDonald said, as his Mats sit in second place (7-2 in league and 17-6 overall). "We still have a chance to win the league and once that's over we'll start thinking about postseason."

If Miramonte does manage to catch the front-runners, Dougherty Valley (8-1), the lion's share of the credit will go to senior Eddy Ionescu.

"Quite frankly, I think that Eddy Ionescu has been the best player in the league," McDonald declared. "Offensively he's been the dominant player - scoring in the mid-20s game in and game out."

It hasn't just been a one-man show, as the Mats have called upon a deep supporting cast.

"It's really been a team effort because the rest of the guys compete as a group," McDonald said. "I could name individuals but I would be listing six to eight after Eddy."

The Mats have just two league games left - including a crucial tilt against Dougherty Valley on Feb. 11. But in the stacked DFAL, the team can't afford to look ahead to the NCS Division III playoffs.

"The league season has been competitive and it's a challenge to win game in and game out, regardless of the opponent," McDonald said. "It's very difficult to win consistently in our league."

Kearey Smith, the head coach of the fourth-place Cougars, echoed McDonald's sentiment.

"I'll be honest with you, this year [in] DFAL, the parity is pretty amazing," Smith said.

Campo's record stands at 4-5 in league (11-12 overall), but it would be even better if not for a couple of January losses to Dougherty Valley and third-place Dublin by a combined eight points. As the Cougars close out the DFAL slate, Smith has a simple message for his players: "effort and consistency."

"That's the consistent thing that I say each and every practice - each and every game," Smith explained.

Like the Mats, the Cougars have benefited from having a talented corps of role players, but the team has also leaned heavily on a trio of senior stars. ... continued on page C3

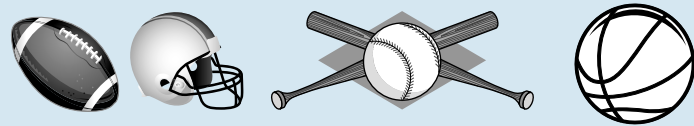


Austin Clarke (24) and Aaron Hill (24)



Andrew McKendell (5) and Trevin Kroichick

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