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## As League Play Begins, Softball Teams Face Uphill Battle

By Alex Crook



Rosetta Shackett Photo Gint Federas

Luck has not been kind to Lamorinda's high school softball programs lately. All three programs look to turn the page, however, as they embark on a brand new season.

Campolindo is captained by its lone senior, Grace Deskin, who's hitting .419 this year with a .514 on-base percentage to go along with an 80.8 fielding percentage. She, along with co-captains Ashley Thoms and Abby Morris - who ranks third in DFAL with 35 strikeouts - will be the go-to playmakers for coach Wayne Stephens' Cougars.

Although Campo retains familiar talent, they graduated all-DFAL shortstop Danielle Thomas, who now plays for Boston College. With the loss of Thomas, the Cougars' infield defense has receded, and the team ERA has subsequently suffered. On offense, however, the team's on-base

percentage and batting averages are significantly higher than previous years. Campolindo sits at the bottom of the league standings, but don't count out a team that was involved in six one-run games last season, including a nine-inning 11-10 win at Las Lomas.

Acalanes held their own last season, tying Las Lomas at 6-6 in league play for third behind Dougherty Valley and nationally ranked Alhambra. The Dons are keeping afloat in 2016 at an even 4-4 but are without three starters, including infielder and captain Zoe Marrott for the remainder of the season due to a shoulder injury. Marrott, who made last year's second team all-DFAL as a shortstop, is headed to Cal next year on a scholarship.

Head coach Victor Silva will field a young team this season for the Dons, as four junior varsity freshmen have since answered the call to varsity.

"We're a really young team," says Silva. "They're all freshmen, and we're really young. They're getting better every day, but it's a learning process."

"We've really been an up-and-down team. With a young team, it's hard to be consistent, and that's been our biggest problem...the younger kids have never played at the varsity level before, and it's tough. The game's really fast, and the girls are stronger, it's hard. And when you're 14 years old playing against girls 17 and 18, it's tough. But they're learning."

After graduating several players, it's fair to say the Mats will have an uphill battle in the DFAL this spring. The Matadors are 5-8 on the year and just 1-3 in league play - they claimed their first and only DFAL victory against Campo on March 29.

Head coach Steve Renfro's team doesn't have the senior depth of Acalanes, but the Matadors' lone senior, Amanda DeVecchi, has played all four years on varsity and is "very productive on the team," Renfro said.

Despite this lack of experience, however, Renfro remains optimistic.

"The younger classmen have been doing a really good job helping the team out," Renfro said. "Our younger classmen have really been stepping up and playing above themselves so I'm actually quite excited about the future. This season is going to be touch and go, we'll play it along as we go from game to game, but I think down the road, they're still going to get stronger and stronger."

Renfro sees his offense strengthening over time, but believes the Matadors still need to hone their pitching and the skills of their younger players.

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[back](#)

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