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As NCS Draws Near, Acalanes' Tennis Hold High Hopes

By Karl Buscheck



Isaiah Bird Photos Gint Federas

hurrah."

At the DFAL Championship on April 29 and 30 at Saint Mary's in Moraga, Bird claimed the singles title, while the Dougherty Valley duo of Winston Yu and Mayson Xue ended up as the kings of the doubles tournament.

On May 6 and 7 at Roundhill Country Club in Alamo, Acalanes and Dougherty Valley - the section's rival heavyweights - will once again square off.

"They're one of best teams in country," Lawrence explained of the DFAL regulars season winners. "So I was really impressed with the fact that we kind of closed the gap with them and we can give them a little more competition hopefully if we were to meet them in the (NCS) finals."

While Acalanes and Dougherty Valley are the powerhouse programs with lofty expectations, Miramonte (13-6 overall, 9-4 in league) stands out as the young upstart.

"I'm playing eight freshmen and sophomores," said Mats head coach Michael McCollum. "That's kind of how it works year-to-year. That experience that those two schools are carrying and the newness of my lineup kind of creates this interesting little dynamic. So. We're hoping for the best."

At Round Hill, the Mats will be counting on senior Alex Hwang - the defending NCS doubles champ and a Whitman recruit - to set the tone for the youngsters like his brother William and Nico Haet, who are both sophomores.

"He's the most important and significant player in the lineup as far as our team goes," McCollum said of the captain and four-year starter.

As his team prepares to take the court for the NCS tournament, McCollum knows just how serious the challenge is that his team faces.

"It will be a tough road ahead," McCollum admitted. "Dougherty Valley has four amazing,

As the postseason rolls along, no Lamorinda tennis team has more talent - or higher expectations - than Acalanes.

"My top three singles players are kind of a unique thing this year," head coach Stephanie Lawrence said of Isaiah Bird, Kyle Everly and Ryan Cardiff. "We've all pretty much realized we might not see this kind of (group) again."

While the historic trio led the Dons (18-2 overall, 10-2 in league) to the semifinals of the CIF State tournament a season ago, they're far from the only upperclassmen that make Acalanes such a dangerous squad.

"Now we're trying to top (our 2015 state run) this year," Lawrence said. "Especially (since) I've got a great group of about seven seniors. It's their last

outstanding players. Acalanes had three really outstanding seniors in their singles ladder. Plus, they have the best regular season doubles team."

Like the Mats, Campo, who posted a 9-8-1 mark overall and a 6-6-1 record in league play, has a youthful roster.

"Our season went well in the respect that our guys played their hearts out," head coach Alan Weissbaum said. "But we lost a lot of really close games because of the third-set tie-breaker and I just attributed that to inexperience. So, what turned out to be an okay season could have been a really good season."

The future looks bright for the Cougars, as Weissbaum views freshman Cal Hunter as a future No. 1 for the program.

Throughout the season, Weissbaum looked to senior captain Jacob Heatlamp - the current No. 1 - to set an example for the younger players both on and off the court.

"He kept really good control (of the team)," Weissbaum said. "And he helped me with the lineup as well as the other captain Jake (Oxendine) - both of them helped me with lineups and they really contributed a lot. That was pretty cool."



Ryan Cardiff



Kyle Everly

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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