

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Local Boys Water Polo Teams Get Set for League Play and Beyond

By Karl Busheck



Casey Conrad - of Acalanes shooting

Photo Gint Federas

As Miramonte prepares to play in the Diablo Athletic League – one of the strongest conferences in NCS – the Mats don't know exactly where they stand. Soon enough, they will.

"We go down to Southern California on (Sept.) 15 and play in a really elite tournament against some of the top teams in the state – right off the bat," said head coach James Lathrop.

The Mats will be taking part in the Elite 8 – one of the premier tournaments in the nation. Harvard Westlake in Studio City is the site of the competition, which features eight of the best programs in the country. That list also includes Mater Dei, who along with Harvard Westlake have battled for California supremacy in recent years.

"We'll get a good test really early on to kind of see where we're at and how we stack up against some of the top teams in the state," Lathrop said. "I think that will hopefully put us in a good spot moving forward into our league schedule (when) we play the bulk of our games."

After the Elite 8, Miramonte plays its first nonconference match against San Ramon Valley in

Danville on Sept. 21. The Mats visit Northgate in Walnut Creek on Sept. 28 to open DAL play.

While recognizing that the seniors will be vital for the Mats, Lathrop pointed to the deep roster as one of the team's most important attributes.

"I think we're expecting to get contributions from a variety of players from a variety of grades," Lathrop said. "Like we have guys in our starting lineup from every grade. So, we rely on the seniors for leadership, but we really do have a wealth of talent from different grades and I think we're trying to be strong as a whole."

The rival Campolindo Cougars, who topped the Mats in last fall's NCS Division I quarterfinals before beating Sir Francis Drake in the championship, also know how crucial the senior contingent will be to the success of the squad.

"Our senior class is always expected to lead," head coach Miles Price explained. "Our three captains are all seniors."

Like Lathrop, Price also has high hopes for the younger members of his roster.

"I think we will have some breakout leaders in other areas,"

Price said. "I'm excited to see who they are. For now we rely on our past experience."

Before taking part in their DAL opener against Acalanes at home on Oct. 5, Campolindo will play a five-match nonconference schedule. Once the league season arrives, the Cougars will be able to zero in on their top target.

"The goal this season is the same as every season: Win NCS," Price said. "Outside of the pool we have plenty of goals surrounding sending players to college and maintaining GPA's in school. In the pool we have one goal, win."

Price also knows that obstacles will arise as the Cougars aim for back-to-back NCS titles.

"The high school season is always tough from a timing standpoint," Price said. "It goes by really fast. If we stay focused on the goal at hand any challenge we run into will result in a lesson learned and better us for the playoffs."

Like the neighboring Mats and Cougars, the Acalanes Dons have lofty ambitions for the season – from the nonconference portion of the schedule to the playoffs.

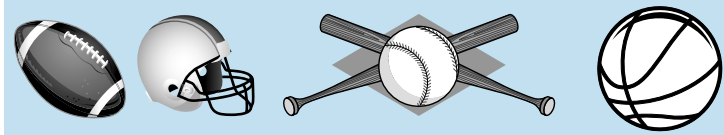
"The expectations every season is to win league and section titles," head coach Clarke Tamariki said. "We expect the kids to work hard to execute what we teach them and the results will take care of themselves."

For Acalanes, who lost in last season's NCS semifinals to Sir Francis Drake – the No. 1 overall seed – Casey Conrad and Brad Robison are the team's senior captains. Conrad, Robison and the rest of the Dons play four nonleague matches before opening DAL play with trip to Las Lomas on Sept. 28.

By the time DAL play begins, Tamariki hopes that all of his players will be in sync.

"What we teach the boys is very simple but takes work and communication," Tamariki said. "The challenge is to trust each other and communicate."

Youth Sports Registration



Lamorinda Lacrosse Club



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