

Local Wrestling Programs Enjoying Success as DAL Draws to Close

By Karl Buscheck

For Miramonte wrestling head coach Jose Herrera, it's difficult to explain just how important seniors Max Fleming and Skyler Wright have been to the school's program.

"I think they're very deserving of a special shoutout or (some special) recognition," Herrera said of the pair of stars.

Both seniors were NCS place winners in their respective weight classes last year - Fleming at 170 pounds and Wright at 152 - and both have continued to perform at a high level in the opening months of the current season. At the Doc Buchanan Invitational in Clovis - one of the premier events on the weekend-tournament circuit - Fleming produced a top-12 finish for the Mats.

"Max Fleming is known as one of the best in the state," Herrera explained. "I just wish I could publicize that more because he and Skyler the last two years have represented the school, (and) Orinda at large, very well at a regional and state level."

Fleming and Wright anchor what has become a deep and talented lineup for Miramonte.

"Oh, absolutely," Herrera said when asked if his team harbors lofty postseason ambitions. "I would say that we truly have about eight varsity wrestlers and I expect to take all eight to the North Coast section tournament."

"Of those eight, I would say three or four have the potential to earn a medal at the North Coast section tournament," Herrera added. "And of those four, two have the potential to be in the state finals or at least get a medal in the state tournament."

Like the Mats, the Dons have assembled a crew of wrestlers aiming to make their mark at next month's DAL championship and the NCS and state tournaments that follow. Also like the Mats, the Dons have been busy competing in the area's top weekend tournaments, such as the Doc Buchanan Invitational.

Middle weights junior Jeremy Ridge is ranked 2nd in NCS and 20th in the state, while senior and fellow captain Tai White continues to excel after becoming the school's first state qualifier last spring. Head coach David Ridge also highlighted the contributions of senior Axel Jurgens who is the

fourth-ranked 152-pound wrestler in NCS and senior Kyle Hulsey a converted power lifter who now wrestles as a heavy weight.

Even though the Dons have yet to drop any DAL dual meets, the team's head coach knows it's too soon to draw any grand conclusions about the team's success.

"We're undefeated in league, but we won't really be able to tell anything until we get to the championships when we get to see Las Lomas, who used to be with us (in the same league conference)," Ridge said.

Before Acalanes can turn its attention to the postseason, the Dons close out the dual meet schedule by visiting Campolindo on Feb. 1.

"It's a whole different thing with wrestling - as opposed to a lot of the other sports," Ridge said when asked about the rivalry with the Cougars. "It's really fun."

"I really, really like their program and there's a real fraternity in wrestling," Ridge said. "So, it's not so much about schools as much as it is about promotion of the sport."

Campolindo, who along with the Mats and the Dons competed in the Foothill Conference of the DAL, is looking forward to hosting Acalanes in the final dual meet of the year.

"It's always exciting to dual a local rival school," Cougars head coach Sam Sotelo said. "Especially when both schools are still undefeated this late in the season."

The Cougars are also well aware of the challenge they'll face when the Dons arrive at their gym.

"Unfortunately, as excited as I am, I am also just as nervous," Sotelo said. "We have had a lot of injuries this year and Acalanes has some great wrestlers, we will have to wrestle our best on Feb. 1 to beat them."

The Cougars will have to battle through those health problems if the team's best wrestlers hope to face off with their counterparts at Miramonte and Acalanes in the post-season.

"Seniors Avery Novick and Savva Vyatkin, (along with) junior Rex Chen and sophomore Keichi Serrano have really stepped up their game this season," Sotelo said. "I think they all have a chance to place in NCS."

St. Perpetua 5th Grade Boys Win the 2016 MVP Flight Holiday Classic Tournament

Submitted by Tara Marusich



Back row, from left: Rich Zirkel (head coach), Jackson Hink, Aidan Haslam, Trevor Carrillo, Will Dreyer; front row from left, Mason Zirkel, Henry Hagel, William Marusich, John Weaver, Terry Dreyer (asst. coach); Not pictured: Aiden Yates and Chase Regan Photo provided

St. Perpetua fifth-grade boys, under Coach Rich Zirkel, participated in the MVP Flight Holiday Classic basketball tournament. The team had three straight wins competing against Christ the King, another St. Perpetua team and the Warriors. The team rallied hard in the final game and came out on top with a 35-32 win in the Championship game.

Santa Maria CYO Girl's 8th Grade Basketball Team Wins



Back row from left, Anna Logan, coach Eversole, Natalie Swanson, Grace Barmmer, Katie Bakonyvari, Reese Whipple, Ava Moran, coach Whipple, coach Bakonyvari; front row from left, Annie Eversole, Alexandra Eversole, Julia Miller, Kate Gross, Kiera O'Toole; not pictured: Claudia Gravano, Leighla Hodges, Lindsey Bliss, Sarah Svahn, Mia Cohen Photo provided

Santa Maria CYO Girl's Eighth-grade Holiday Tournament, beating Christ the King in a nail-biting final game.

St. Monica Boys Win Holiday Classic

Submitted by Rudy Ortiz



Back row from left, Ayan Patel, Charlie Stafford and Matthew Jabbour; front row from left, Daniel Louie, Jake Spencer, Isaiah Ortiz and Benjamin Tallon Photo provided

The St. Monica fifth-grade boys' basketball team won the 2016 MVP Flight Holiday Classic in Walnut Creek in a come-from-behind game on Dec.23. The tournament took place over two successive weeks and the boys demonstrated teamwork, hustle and determination as they erased a 14-point deficit to earn the come from behind victory.

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