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Acalanes boys soccer angling for top spot in league

By Karl Buscheck



Tom Higgins Photos Gint Federas

With the Diablo Athletic League slate rapidly drawing to a close and the North Coast Section postseason approaching, the Acalanes boys soccer team is in the mix to claim first place in the league standings.

"The boys have been performing well all season and as the competition has improved, so has the team, said head coach Paul Curtis. "In the past several matches, the senior class members have really stepped up their performance. It's exciting for everyone to see them rising to the challenge."

After smashing Berean Christina 6-0 in Walnut Creek on Feb. 3, the Dons pushed their record to 14-2-3 overall and 7-1 in DAL. With just one loss in their last nine games, the senior-laden Dons are peaking at just the right moment.

"Drew Wondolowski and Mark Von Hacht the senior co-captains have done a really great job this season," said Curtis, who also praised the impact of seniors Tom Higgins, Gabe Singer, Nixon Murgia, Brody Quinn, Payson Newman and Bryan Bamford.

"(The captains) have the boys training and performing well together; working hard and having a lot of fun," Curtis added.

The title contenders have also received season-long contributions from underclassman like juniors Alex Topping, Luke Denham and Oliver Feigin and sophomore Chris Rogers.

Before turning their attention to the playoffs, the Dons will pay a visit to Orinda to cap off the regular season with a game against the Mats on Feb. 10.

"This is a very talented group of players who excel on the field and in the classroom. Juggling their heavy academic load, personal lives and soccer team commitments takes a tremendous amount of effort and focus. Their ability to manage this rather well is one of the significant reasons for their success."

With an 8-8-2 record overall and a 4-3-1 record in DAL, the Mats are also in the chase for an NCS berth. Over the past month, Miramonte has found itself in a rough patch dropping four of five games, including a 3-1 defeat to Campolindo in Moraga. The win brought the Cougars record to 9-9-3 overall and 2-4-2 in league.

"The rivalry game with Miramonte is always a game to look forward to," head coach Shane Carney said in the run-up to the matchup.

The Mats had made a habit of dominating the Cougars in the early 2000s, but Campolindo has "flipped the script" in recent years, as Carney pointed out.

"When we meet, you can throw records and expectations out the window," Carney added. "It usually just comes down to who wants it more."

For a team whose roster is heavy on young players, the Cougars have relied on a pair of the squad's veteran contributors.

"(Senior) Rupert Dusauzay has been our most dangerous attacking player and is one of the leading goal scorers in the Bay Area this season," Carney said. "(Junior) Seppi Ortman moved from the midfield to the backline midseason, which gave us some defensive stability we were missing early on."

Against the Mats, Dusauzay struck two goals and Ortman added the third. Now, the rising Cougars will look to make a late run to grab an NCS spot.

"More than half of our team is underclassmen, which is an extreme rarity at a varsity sport," Carney said. "So we're hopeful our youth has gained enough experience to find some late season success."



Drew Wondolowski



Campolindo soccer team

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[back](#)

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