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## Campo girls' soccer making strong push as NCS approaches

By Karl Buscheck



From left: Mia Grillo (14) and Devon Ortman (42) Photos Gint Federas

As the Campolindo girls' soccer team embarks upon the final week of the Diablo Athletic League schedule, head coach Ernesto Silva is telling his squad to follow a simple philosophy.

"To buy what I am selling," Silva said when asked what the Cougars need to do to reach their North Coast Section goals. "In high school, we all have a very small window to make our teams gel and play as one, once we are all on the same page, the results will come."

Sitting at 10-6-1 overall and 5-3 in league, the Cougars have won five of six, most recently blanking Acalanes, 2-0, at home on Feb. 3.

"I feel we are making great progress and the team is starting to adapt to the system of play that I believe best suits our abilities," Silva said.

With just one league game left - a road trip to Walnut Creek to face Las Lomas on Feb. 10 - Campolindo has called on two leaders with greatly differing styles.

"Freshman Devon Ortman has been a great addition to our back line, she is my voice inside the field and communicates very well, she keeps everyone on their toes," Silva explained. "Senior Lindsey Easter has quietly lead by example. Her great attitude and work rate motivates everyone around her to try harder."

Acalanes, who was on the wrong end of the shutout against the Cougars, have navigated an up-and-down season, marred by injuries.

"It's been hard to adapt to the situation because it would be nice to have a consistent formation in order to compete," head coach Anthony Rascon said. "But, we're just adapting. Trying to take it game-by-game."

Owners of a 5-7-2 record overall (2-4-2 in league), the Dons know they will need a strong end to the DAL schedule if they're going to secure an NCS berth.

"We just want to make it into the party and we know that we have the team to go deep," Rascon said. "And we don't care who we're playing in NCS because we know that we have a powerful team and that we can go far."

The Dons are led by senior captain and defensive midfielder Callie Ericksen who is the team's anchor. Then there's Emily Smith, an emerging college prospect.

"You can't take the ball away from her," Rascon said of the junior. "Her vision, her touch - it's on another level. She's a promising player and I think she can go very far and get recruited by a good college."

Acalanes ends the DAL portion of the schedule with a visit to Orinda to take on the Mats on Feb. 10.

"Those are the type of games we look forward to," Rascon said. "We were fortunate enough to beat them at their stadium, 4-1. Hopefully we repeat something similar or better and we're just going to try to have the most intensity, be very aggressive, put away our opportunities and have a clean sheet."

Miramonte is captained by a trio of seniors in Morgan Johnson, Mia Grillo and Samantha Devecchi. The Mats recently snapped a three-game losing streak, topping Alhambra 1-0 on Feb. 3 in Martinez. Grillo hit the lone goal in the contest after she was set up by Devecchi.

"Grillo can play any position," head coach Barry McQuain said. "But mostly, we like her up front and she is our target for all the corner kicks and set plays. (Against Alhambra), she scored on a diving head first play that should be on anyone's highlights video."

The Mats, who have posted an 8-7-2 record overall and a 3-5 mark in league action, will also be looking to snag a postseason spot with a sound end to the season.

"Despite the injuries, we've got a chance to qualify for the NCS tournament and that is our goal," McQuain

said. "Our opponents in the next few games probably have the same goal, and probably only one of us will make it. But as long as our girls play the best they can for each game, they should be proud of their performance even if the final score isn't in our favor."



Callie Ericksen



Morgan Johnson

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[back](#)

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