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DAL title 'up for grabs' as boys' hoops season draws to close

By Karl Buscheck



Chris Wright

Even as Campolindo sits in a tie for first place in the Diablo Athletic League with a 5-1 record in league and an 15-7 mark overall, the Cougars can't be bothered to look ahead to the North Coast Section postseason looming at the end of the month.

"Our league is really tough," explained Cougars boys' basketball head coach Steven Dyer. "So every game is a battle and we still have (three) league games left and then the postseason we're hoping to get a high seed and a lot of home games. That's the hope. But we have a lot of business that we have to take care of before that."

The key for the Cougars has been the club's remarkable consistency, as the squad has yet to string together back-to-back losses.

"We have good chemistry on the team," Dyer said. "All the guys like playing together which helps."

Chris Wright, Tom Caprio and Quinn Cuddihy are the team's three senior captains, while a whole array of Cougars has chipped in on the floor.

"In terms of oncourt production, Wright, (junior) Will Cummins and (freshman) Hunter Clarke are kind of our three leading scorers," Dyer said, adding that Clarke is also the top rebounder and junior point guard Trevin Kroichick paces the team in assists and steals.

On Feb. 3, the Cougars edged past Miramonte, 48-46, in Orinda. The Mats are led by Wayne Hunter who had roughly a month to prepare for his first season as the head coach of the varsity squad. Originally, Hunter had been brought in to pilot the junior varsity program.

"I think so far, we've had a pretty successful (year)," said Hunter, whose team sits at 3-3 in DAL play and 13-9 overall. "You look at the record and the record may not say the season has been successful, but I think with all the moving parts and the late start that I got off to - getting the job in October - I think the boys responded well."

Hunter landed the top post after the former varsity head coach resigned shortly before the season, and now, less

than two weeks from the NCS seeding, the Mats are within striking distance of a postseason spot.

"To be honest, our league is up for grabs," Hunter said. "We have a tough league with a lot of competitive teams. This league, these teams have history with one another given how close in distance these schools are. They've grown up together. I think that alone intensifies our league. That's what drives our league."

As the Mats battle their DAL neighbors like the Cougars and the Dons, seniors Charlie Hocking and Nick Foster have emerged as two of the team's most indispensable players. Hocking is the captain and a three-year varsity contributor, while Foster is the squad's jack-of-all-trades.

"He's a 5-foot-11 do-everything type of guy that everyone knows he's that guy who's going to give 110 percent every practice, every game - regardless of if he gets the accolades in the box score," Hunter said.

Hunter also pointed to sophomore Miles Beaubelle, who's emerged as one of the Mats youthful leaders who commands the respect of his more established teammates.

"I think his game speaks volumes and he works really hard," Hunter said. "He's worked all summer and all

fall to have the success he's having so far."

Like Harvey, Acalanes head coach Sol Henik is in the midst of his debut season on the bench with the program.

"The transition to coaching at Acalanes has been great," Henik said. "The players have worked extremely hard and we have definitely (performed). We're in the hunt to win the DAL."

After losing to Las Lomas, 69-49, on Feb. 3 on the road, the Dons have three games left in DAL play, including a matchup on Feb. 10 at Campolindo - the co-leaders.

The coach described securing the DAL title as the team's short-term objective, explaining that captains Jesse Marlow and Aidan McNamara will play a crucial part in achieving that goal

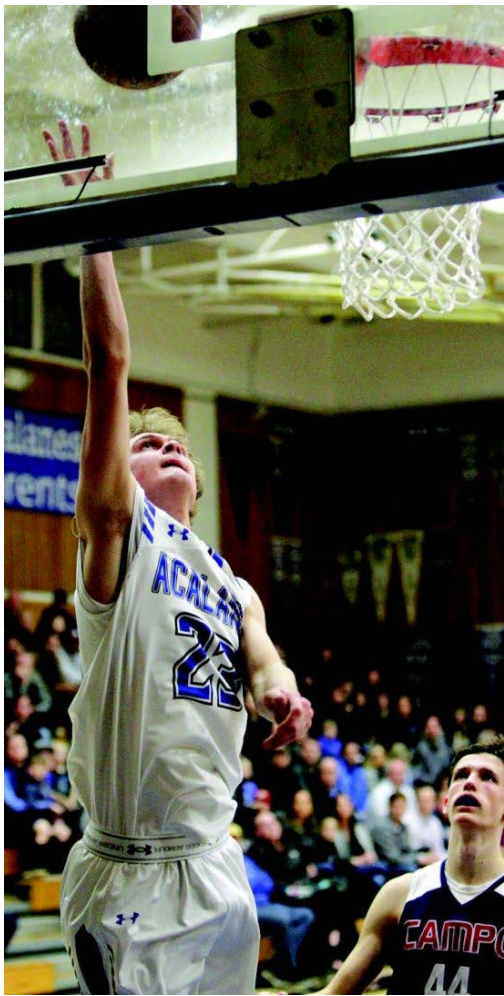
"Those two players are having a tremendous year in keeping everyone together and really making this offense click," Henik said Marlow who is a senior and McNamara who is a junior.

After 16 combined wins in past two seasons, the Dons are well on way to NCS berth, holding a 13-9 record and a 3-3 mark in DAL.

"It's an exciting time for Acalanes because they have not enjoyed a lot of success in recent years," Henik said.



Nick Foster



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