

Published March 8th, 2017

Campo boys' hoops team loses in NCS championship, but advances to NorCals

By Karl Buscheck



Chris Wright Photo Gint Federas

The Campolindo boys' basketball team dropped the NCS Division 3 title game to Salesian 55-40 on March 4 at Saint Mary's College, but the postseason run continues on for the upstart Cougars.

The next order of business for Campolindo, (19-11, 7-4) will be to take part in the CIF NorCal regional tournament, which begins on March 8. Even after that NCS setback, the Cougars find themselves in a spot that few would have predicted heading into the season.

"We definitely enjoyed that fact (the we qualified) because I don't think a lot of people thought this team could do that," said head coach Steven Dyer. "But at the same time, we can enjoy all these things more at the end of the season. When you're in the moment, you want to just do your best to focus on the next game."

Dyer believes that the lack of hype surrounding the squad helped drive the Cougars, at least in part, to a second-place tie in the Foothill division of the DAL and their current berth in NorCals.

"I think that's motivated a lot of guys," Dyer said. "I think a lot of the varsity guys coming back weren't very happy with how their season went last year. So, I think there's a lot of motivation and then we have a lot of young guys who are trying to prove themselves at this level."

The trickiest part of competing in NorCals is that the Cougars will now be running up against teams from far-flung locales across the region.

"It will be obviously very challenging because there's teams from the Sacramento area, teams from way up north, teams from the Peninsula, so you could be playing a lot of good teams," Dyer said. "It will be obviously challenging."

Dyer highlighted a trio of seniors - Chris Wright, Lev Garcia and Mike Navruzyan - for spearheading the team's NCS run into NorCals. After drawing a bye in the opening round as the No. 2 seed, the Cougars thumped No. 7 Hercules, 51-32, as Wright chipped in a double-double with 16 points and 16 boards.

"We earned that No. 2 seed, which was big because we got a home game in the quarterfinals and the semifinals," Dyer said.

Garcia's introduction into the starting five has been crucial to the Cougars' emergence.

"Lev Garcia has been a really good defensive player," Dyer. "Our season's really taken off since he's been in the starting lineup."

Meanwhile, Navruzyan hit a few big 3's off the bench in Campolindo's 68-53 semifinals win over Analy.

"That semifinal game against Analy was maybe the best game we've played all year - both offensively and defensively," Dyer said. "So, it's always good to be playing some of your best basketball in the postseason. So, I'm really proud of the guys."

As the team begins its NorCal drive, the team's depth - the Cougars have received contributions from players up and down the roster - will be essential.

"It's been a group effort, for sure," Dyer said. "And the one thing, or the biggest thing, is that this team plays really well together and is a very unselfish group which makes things fun as a coach."

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA