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Campolindo, Miramonte boys' hoops teams bow out of NorCals

By Karl Buscheck



Lev Garcia Photo Gint Federas

Following Campolindo's near upset of the favored Vista del Lago in the second round of the CIF State Boys Regional Championship, the Cougars were left to wonder what could have been.

Playing in Folsom at the home gym of the No. 2 seed Eagles, the seventh-seeded Cougars carried a 57-45 advantage into the final stanza on March 11 before falling in overtime, 70-66. The late loss put Campolindo in an ambivalent state following their NorCal exit.

When asked if the lost opportunity against the highly rated opponent had the Cougars feeling encouraged or extra frustrated, head coach Steven Dyer said, "Probably some of both.

"It's a game that our guys expected to win and we felt like we played well enough to win it," Dyer added. "But we did not play a great fourth quarter and that kind of led us to not winning that game."

Campolindo finished the year 20-11 overall and 7-3 in league play, which was good for a second-place tie in the Foothill division of the DAL.

"We definitely represented ourselves pretty well going up to a school that was a No. 2 seed and a very good basketball team," Dyer said. "It was probably the tallest team we'd seen all year."

Campolindo advanced to the second round of the competition after handling the No. 10 seed Sanger, 58-53, in Moraga on March 8.

"Ultimately, we look back on it (and think), 'Yeah, we're pretty pleased with how we did, but not satisfied because we feel like we could have won,'" Dyer said.

After the overtime buzzer sounded following the Campolindo's second-round defeat, Dyer gathered his team to thank the veterans and inspire the young Cougars.

"It's tough because this is the last time this team will ever play together," Dyer said. "But mainly I was just thanking the seniors for all contributions this year because they won't be playing with us anymore. Also, I was encouraging the younger guys that there's more (to come) and telling them to remember this feeling and hopefully we can get past this round in coming years."

Dyer highlighted the play of Lev Garcia - one of the team's departing seniors - junior guard Trevin Kroichick and the other three members of the starting five.

"In terms of impact for the season, (freshman) Hunter Clarke, (senior) Chris Wright and (junior) Will Cummins were, from Day 1 to the end, probably our three most consistent guys throughout the year from a production standpoint."

Clarke is one of two Cougar freshman - along with Carter Mahaney - who promises to be a building block for years. In the loss to Vista del Lago, Clarke and Mahaney were Campolindo's two leading scorers.

"We knew these guys were very talented coming in, and Hunter from Day 1 has really been a high-level player," Dyer said. "And I think Carter, the light kind of turned on about halfway through the season."

"The sky's the limit for those guys as long as they keep working hard," Dyer added. "So I'm really looking forward to their progression in the offseason here heading into their sophomore year."

Like the Cougars, Miramonte played in the Division 3 NorCal postseason, landing the No. 11 seed in the bracket. To cap head coach Wayne Hunter's first season with the program, Miramonte fell in the opening round, 63-57, to six seed Monterey on March 8.

"It was huge for us," Hunter said of the NorCal appearance after only taking over in October. "I talk about the circumstances, the late start, not being able to build in the spring.

"I thought my boys competed and they gave it their all," Hunter said. "And, obviously, they were just couple of plays short of winning a few more games, but just making it to the playoffs in general, that is a huge accomplishment."

The Mats, (16-13, 5-5), will lose senior captain Charlie Hocking among others, but Hunter believes a culture has been established which will ensure future success.

"I want to highlight my returners," Hunter said. "So I want to highlight (junior wing) Nikhil Shastri and (sophomore point guard) Jayson Fernbacher."



Charlie Hocking

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