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## Miramonte girls water polo dominates in season play

By Jon Kingdon



The Miramonte Varsity Women's Water Polo team won this year's NorCal Invitational for the first time in their history. Photo Pam Drake

for games. We approach each opponent with the same intensity, mental approach and process regardless of the level of competition. We practice with the same high pressure situations as we do in the games."

The closest game for Miramonte this season was against Davis High School with Miramonte winning 7-6 despite giving up five goals to Davis in the fourth quarter. Morrison turned a near negative into a positive. "I appreciate a game like this because it provided us with the opportunity to learn from our mistakes," he said. "We studied the game as a team. We reconsidered our approach in the fourth quarter and were able to identify what we did wrong that cost us."

With so many runaway games, many of the substitutes have been able to play alongside the starters. Morrison does not want to see a drop off. "When we bring in our subs, they have to maintain the same pace as the starters and for the most part they have done so, either as backups or stepping in for injured starters. They are in a tough position in that this may be the best water polo team in Miramonte history and our backups could be starters for many other teams. This should certainly pay dividends for them and us in the future."

As dominant as the team's offense has been, Morrison knows that that is only one aspect of the game. There are games when the offense is not what it should be. Knowing that, he places as much emphasis on his defense: "We take pride in ourselves in having a top defense. Offense is great but defense is what wins championships. Our practices are heavily focused on defense. Our defense has been giving up fewer than five goals a game."

Junior goalie Savannah Sherwood has shown constant improvement. Morrison appreciates how fortunate he is to have a goalie of her caliber. "Savannah has been great running the defense," he said. "She is a true student of the game and learns from her mistakes which is a great attribute."

Miramonte has five senior co-captains, all who have been starters since their sophomore year:

Grace Tehaney and Skylar Savar, both who will be playing for USC next year; Carson Broad, who will be playing for California; Katrina Drake who will be playing for UCLA; and Kelly Murphy, who has yet to choose where she will play in college.

Morrison has come to rely on them in many ways. "All five captains have been great leaders in their own way. They do a great job in pushing the tempo in practice," he said. "They enforce my rules and policies in pre and post game; they get together to coordinate outfits on game days and get the players pumped up; they do a lot of personality management aside from the coaches; they stay on top of each other and I trust them with this; they are the intermediate management for the coaches; they provide tremendous chemistry for the team. These girls are all class acts and very receptive and coachable with the freedom to give feedback."

Morrison is simply enjoying the ride. "It may be a long time before I will coach a squad as talented as this. They're enjoying this very much. It's an incredible experience. By no means are we taking anything for granted."

Prior to the 2017 season, first year Miramonte girls water polo head coach Lance Morrison did not hold back in his appraisal of his team's strength: "Our offensive power is huge. I've never seen a team at this level with so much power. We can score from any position in the pool."

If anything, he was not optimistic enough. With a 23-0 record this season, the Matadors have outscored their opponents a combined 342 to 103. They have scored over 20 goals six times this season along with two shutouts.

Morrison and his assistant coaches, John Felix, Noel Murphy and Chris Lloyd, do not allow themselves or their team to live off their laurels. Says Morrison: "Keeping the team focused is the timeless challenge for any team that is as dominant as this one. To keep them hungry, for us, it's a proactive effort for the coaches and the girls. We approach every practice and every game the same way. We don't rely on our opponents to get us up



Savannah Sherwood



Kelly Murphy



Katrina Drake

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[back](#)

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