

Season roundup for Lamorinda high school girls soccer

By Jon Kingdon



Kierra Krawec (Acalanes)

Photo Gint Federas

As the United States rallied around the Olympic Curling team that had a 2-4 record and went on to win their next five matches and the gold medal, the residents of Moraga were able to get behind the Campolindo girls soccer team that was 4-7 and then went 9-0-1 in the next 10 games, ultimately defeating Analy High School 3-0 to win the North Coast Section championship and qualify for the state regional tournament.

How does a team turn it around so abruptly? Head coach Ernesto Silva does not have a simple answer: "It's a combination of many things - the leadership of the team's captains and the seniors; the girls buying into the program; supportive parents and the team peaking at the right time."

With most of the players participating in club soccer, playing

for different clubs with different coaches, techniques and philosophies, Silva credited the girls with buying into his system: "The girls allowed me to mold them the way I needed them for the team to be successful. When they all went along, the change came."

It was a balanced effort for the Cougars starting with the defense. Goalies Mallory Louis and Ashley Mulakaluri and center backs Devon Ortman and Nicole Huebner worked together to only give up 21 goals in 22 games. Says Silva appreciatively: "We were in every game due to our defense."

The improvement in the team's offense was a group effort. Ortman and Huebner were effective in getting the ball to midfielder Molly Ikeya who Silva praised for being "instrumental on the creative side and advancing the ball downfield

and scoring herself."

Bringing it all together downfield was sophomore, forward Celia Campo. Says Silva, "Celia grew significantly, becoming the go-to player that got things done. She is very confident and the team rallied around that confidence." Against Analy, a team that had given up only five goals all season, Campo scored two goals.

As Silva waits to learn who his team will play in the regionals, he can't help but be optimistic about next season: "We have a great foundation for the future with a good number of players with great potential who got a lot of experience this year."

Playing in some early tournaments against bigger schools, led to a poor early season record for Miramonte. When the team's record was 3-9-1, coach Barry McQuain wanted his players to keep their eye on the prize, making the NCS playoffs. The Matadors met that goal. Though losing their playoff game to Alhambra 2-1, McQuain felt it was a successful season: "Making the playoffs and going 5-5 in league play are both positives." McQuain also found satisfaction in the team having split their games with NCS champion, Campolindo.

With the team battling through numerous injuries and illness, things improved as the season progressed. Says McQuain: "Though we did rebound from the early season injuries, there was only one

game when we were able to dress all 22 girls on the squad."

When the team chose their most valuable offensive player (junior striker Taylor Walthall), most valuable defensive player (sophomore defender Sabrina Grant) and overall most valuable player (sophomore midfielder Olivia Grillo), it was not lost on McQuain that all were underclassmen.

Says McQuain: "Sabrina brings great calm and control on the field, Taylor is super quick with good body control and was our leading scorer and Olivia was our overall most valuable player."

With so many underclassmen returning next season, McQuain puts it simply: "We should have a strong team next year."

Despite a 4-13-2 record in his first year as Acalanes head coach Sasha Chalak came away with an optimistic outlook for the future. With a large number of underclassman and bringing in a new system, it was a matter of taking one step back to take two steps forward. Says Chalak: "It was a difficult season that comes with a transition in culture and mentality and mental approach to the game that was not in place before. I was pleased that toward the end of the season the team really came together."

On the positive side having to play so many underclassmen who had not played on varsity before, it did provide a foundation for the Dons to build on. Chalak saw the

positive in all this: "It turned out to be a good thing. We have a very promising future. Though the record was not what we wanted, in our league play, we improved against every team that we played the second time."

Citing his team's play against Alhambra when his best defender, Caitlin McDonagh, went down with an injury, Chalak saw it as evidence of the growth of the Dons: "When Caitlin went down, the defense pulled together for the rest of the season."

Acalanes had to rely on seniors Emily Smith and Kierra Krawec for most of the scoring early in the season. As the season progressed, a number of the younger players became more inclusive in the offense, helping their confidence.

Chalak is excited about a number of his returning players: "Our leaders for next season will be junior defender Malika Haji, who was a co-captain this year, and sophomore forward Jordan Pratt who was a great worker and who set a great example for her teammates. It always brings value to a program when you have a player like Jordan to push her teammates. Freshman defender, Samantha Hansen led the team in minutes played, starting every game and never leaving the field." Chalak is also anticipating contributions from the Acalanes JV captains, freshman Olivia Parnell and sophomore Maile Broad.

Lamorinda girls basketball season summary



Photo Gint Federas

This is the most resilient team I have had. To see them step in and improve has been really rewarding."

Ironically, Thoms maybe took the most pride in the teams third round playoff loss to Salesian College Prep (53-44). So short-handed, with two additional players out

sick, Campolindo had to bring up five girls from the junior varsity. It wasn't easy according to Thoms: "We had to have a Saturday practice with just the JV girls and they all played. To only lose by nine points under these conditions, the effort from the team was impressive. Not to be overlooked, if

that is possible, was the play of senior and Washington bound, Haley Van Dyke who took on even more responsibility. In the playoff win over Moreau Catholic (73-50), Van Dyke scored 60 points, 54 in the last three quarters, the third highest total scored among Northern California girl players.

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Complimenting Van Dyke's play was senior co-captain Grace McGuire described by Thoms as "our team leader vocally. She played great against Salesian. Sara White was another player that came up big and was fantastic on defense."

With Meyer returning from her injury, Mariella Crudele's outside shooting and the development of sophomore point guard Kate Brown, Thoms finds real satisfaction with his players: "This team really gets along better than any other kids I have ever had. There have been no issues. It's the tightest group I have ever had."

Acalanes head coach Michelle Sasaki headed into the season with a very young team. On top of that, the Dons lost two key players to injuries, senior Olivia Toth and sophomore Kaylee Pond. Still Acalanes finished with a 16-11 season (11-6 non league and 5-5 in league play, finishing third behind Miramonte and Campolindo).

Says Sasaki: "I thought the season was challenging but it much exceeded my expectations for such a young team. We had all new starters in a highly competitive league. In January we were down to six players and yet we continued to win half our games. This was a very gritty group that did a nice job in valuing the process."

Freshmen Gaby Schneider and Grace Gebhardt laid the foundation for the team. With so many underclassmen playing this season, Sasaki sees the positive: "For the young kids to get so much playing time each game, will prove to be invaluable next year. It's experience you can't get in practice."

With the maturation of the young players and the return of Pond next season, Sasaki remains optimistic: "All the girls did a great job and if they commit to the team, they can be successful at the varsity level. I'm hope to see if we can get more numbers out for the team."

LMYA VOLLEYBALL

Season Kicks off with 2 Great Events!



Players Attend Evaluation Day

LMYA Volleyball Commissioner, Eric Standing, and the LMYA Trainers run the players through a series of drills and games to determine fair teams. The program, made up of 4th-8th graders, kicks off on March 12th and runs for 8 weeks.

Coaches Training Held at St. Mary's College

St. Mary's Women's Volleyball Coach, Rob Browning, and the SMC players, lead LMYA Coaches, Trainers and Players, through a series of fun and instructive drills designed to build a teaching foundation for the 2018 season.



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