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Lamorinda girls soccer – 2018

By Jon Kingdon



Megan Go, Acalanes and Alexandria Ziem, Miramonte



Aliye Wingate, Acalanes and Angelina Basso, Miramonte

As has been mentioned incessantly for all sports, the infamous air quality index was a factor for the girls soccer teams, limiting the opportunity to practice and prepare for the season.

Though the new head coach at Acalanes, Nick Barbarino, grew up in Southern California, he brings a Lamorinda connection to his position. Barbarino had four cousins who went to Campolindo and came to Acalanes after being an assistant at Miramonte, receiving a strong recommendation from Miramonte head coach Barry McQuain.

Last season, Acalanes only won four games. Barbarino has turned things around with a 3-0-1 start and appreciates the attitude his team has brought to the pitch: "With only three practices before our first game, I have found that our players are really hard workers and great teammates with each other. There are no cliques and they have all been supportive of each other."

The Dons are a largely veteran team comprising mostly juniors and seniors. Barbarino was familiar with the team having coached against them at Miramonte: "What I had seen was that there was a lot of individual talent and they did not really get along with each other, which hurt their success. We have worked with the seniors on being good leaders on and off the field and we're really trying to focus on bringing in a positive culture. My goal from the start has been to make it a place where the girls want to play and have fun."

The strength of the team has been its defense. Junior goalie Kate Carter has been dominant in goal, giving up only 0.5 goals per game. Says Barbarino: "Kate has been playing great. She is great with saves in the air and is good handling breakaways."

The Dons offense has been equally impressive scoring 4.25 goals per game. Leading the offense have been seniors Sasha Sadoff, Maddie Zuber and Lara Dissman. Each of them brings a unique asset to the offense, says Barbarino: "Sasha is a great dribbler and is very tough. Maddie does a great job

in holding the ball up and laying it off to the other players and facilities our transfer from defense to offense. Lara's strengths are her speed and shooting. We also have a lot of depth at the wings."

K.K. McDonagh and Malika Haji were voted co-captains by the team and Barbarino will have a third rotating captain each game for the players.

Summing up his philosophy, Barbarino is concerned about the experience as well as the results: "I'm a positive coach. I don't expect them to be perfect. Everyone makes mistakes. It's how they react to the mistakes. They have to learn how to handle the hard times on the field as a player and as a person."

As an assistant coach for Campolindo for the past six seasons, new head coach Luis Pinto was able to witness the late season success for the Cougars when they were undefeated in 10 of their last 11 games, making it to the Northern California Regional Championship. Pinto has learned the difference in being a head coach: "I know that a lot more falls on me. I had a very good mentor in (former coach) Ernest Silva. He taught me a great deal as a coach and as an administrator regarding such things as tryouts and scheduling."

The Cougars have a total of 62 players playing soccer this year with 20 on the varsity, 21 on the JV and for the first time, a freshman team with 21 players. Yet, there are only three seniors on the varsity, says Pinto: "With so few seniors, it's basically a young team but it's a team with a lot of energy and potential and the girls are passionate about the game."

Campolindo's defense is being led by junior goalie Mallory Louis who only gave up 1.36 goals per game last season and is being backed up by freshman Anna Solomon. Says Pinto: "Mallory has great reactions and is really good second-shot stopper. Anna's strength is her technical ability but still has a lot to learn. Mallory and Anna should be a great combination."

The back line on defense has a lot of experience led by senior Nicole Huebner and junior Devon Ortman who have played together for the last seven years on club teams and Campolindo.

The offense is being led by seniors Celia Campo, Savannah DeCarlo and sophomore Jojo Flower. According to Pinto: "Celia at left wing has really stepped it up and will be our key player in the front line. Savannah at right wing is a very dynamic player, makings runs into space, pushing up the field and helping out on defense as well. Jojo is a striker with good technical ability to distribute the ball."

The co-captains of the team are Julia Colombini, DeCarlo and Huebner, a group Pinto is counting on: "They have been setting the high standards for the rest of the team on and off the field and carrying on what we are teaching. They have really helped getting the team to become a team despite our lack of practice."

Miramonte head coach Barry McQuain, coming off a playoff season, sees the strength of the team this season being its balance: "Along with a lot of speed on the team, we have an even level of talent. Overall, we have good speed and the team as a whole has good skills which gives us a lot of depth."

The Matadors offense has a number of players that were very productive last season. Junior Taylor Walthal (9 goals, 5 assists), Bea Whitaker (4 goals, 1 assist) and Olivia Grillo (4 goals, 5 assists). Says McQuain, "Taylor is deceptively fast. She ends up with the ball with good fakes and movement. Bea is just a strong player. She is a great athlete who runs cross country and is very motivated to win. Olivia is a great passer and has tremendous power."

Sophomores Angelina Basso and Emerson Bohling are being counted on to be forces on the wings. At midfield, Mc Quain says the key player is senior Isabel Fine: "Isabel is the playmaker on the team. She develops and transitions the team from defense to offense."

The defense is led by junior goalie Mikayla Smith. "Mikayla is in her third year on the varsity, says Mc Quain, "She has played a lot and is a lot more comfortable in the goal. She is very strong and is good getting depth on the goalie kicks."

The defensive front is led by Alison Whipple, Taylor Johnson and Sabrina Grant, all of whom are "strong players who do a good job staying focused," says Mc Quain.

Whipple and Johnson, along with Teveen Aghababian, are the team's co-captains. "They have a great attitude," says McQuain. "They are a great help at our practices and help keep us organized. Teveen is coming off a serious knee injury and we are hoping to get her back by the end of the season."

McQuain understands that with the early season practice limitations, it is going to take time for the team to develop: "We had only one practice prior to the season where everyone was able to show up. I am looking for us to gel as a team as the season progresses. We're still learning our timing, which is the most important part of the preseason but I know that we're all on the same footing."



Alison Whipple, Miramonte

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