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Lamorinda Boys Basketball roundup: Campo inches closer in state finals

By Jon Kingdon



Aidan Mahaney Photos Gint Federas

Campolindo extended their season March 2 to the state semifinals, winning their 25th game with a victory over Grant High School (Sacramento) by a score of 53-51 in the CIF state Division II tournament. Down by three points entering the fourth quarter, freshman Aidan Mahaney who had been having a cold shooting night hit three field goals for seven points, David Ahazie, who scored 14 points, returned to the game after bruising his hip to hit a key three-pointer to put Campolindo ahead 48-43 and Carter Mahaney scored seven points in the period, five of them coming on free throws late in the game to clinch the victory.

Aidan showed no hesitation in putting up his shots in the fourth quarter despite missing so many shots earlier in the game: "I've put in the time and I was confident that I would make the shots and I knew the team was confident in me."

Campolindo head coach Steven Dyer's goal was to improve the team's overall defense and they have given up five fewer points a game this season. "Defense was the key to our victory, holding Grant to 51 points," said Dyer. "We gave up a lot of size but we did well on the defensive boards. We played good team defense with all five guys working together. When you do the right things on defense and don't make mistakes, the other team is going to make mistakes. The players followed the game plan well."

Grant tried to pressure Campolindo all night but the Mahaney's handled the press avoiding any turnovers. Said Dyer: "Aiden and Carter put so much time in their game and it shows in how well they handled the ball."

Campolindo came into the game having played in 14 games that had been decided by five points or fewer which helped against Grant: "We're a young team and it's a process for the younger players to finish games. Even though we missed some free throws, we've been doing a better job closing out the close games."

Campolindo was slated to play in the state semifinal game against Serra High School on March 5 at Campolindo, after press time.

Miramonte

Miramonte made a major turnaround from last season improving their 9-17 record in 2018 to a 17-11 record this season, highlighted by a victory over Campolindo in the regular season and making it to the second round of the NCS playoffs.

Miramonte head coach Wayne Hunter promised that the Matadors were going to be an aggressive team that was going to set the tone and grind it out every game. He was true to his word: "It was fun coaching this group. We were one of the best defensive teams in the Bay Area shooting percentage wise. Our players did everything that we asked." Twelve times the Matadors held their opponents to 50 points or fewer, giving up an average of only 54 points per game.

Hunter gives much of the credit for the team's success to senior captain Jayson Fernbacher (16.3 ppg/3.6 assists/4.5 rebounds). "Jason really improved this year and was a great leader and model for the rest of the team," he said. "He's a 4.0 student that the players followed."

With only six players from last year's varsity, Hunter had a number of underclassmen step up: "We had a lot of JV players that really stepped up. Our team had a lot of chemistry. They were a very coachable group that bought into our system and really knew how we ran our offense."

Hunter will be counting on Niyi Olabode to replace Fernbacher next season: "Niyi can be a special player as our point guard. I'm also looking for some big contributions from a number of players on this year's JV team."

Matt Meredith, the quarterback for the Matador's football team, had a solid season. Though late coming to the team, with the football team in the playoffs, he going to be counted on to lead the team next year, says

Hunter: "Matt is a no-nonsense guy who was a co-captain this year. He leads by example and the players follow him. Nick Watson, who started at the five, though undersized was the heart and soul of the team. He was our top defensive player and always took the toughest player on the other team. He made a number of key buckets and did a lot of things that did not necessarily show up in the statistics."

The bottom line, according to Hunter, was that "we left gyms letting people know we were a scrappy team."

Acalanes

Even with a 9-17 record this year, Acalanes head coach Sol Henik came away from the season with great optimism. Despite losing five players to graduation, only one of the seniors (Ian Archer-13.4) was among the top six scorers on team.

This was a team that played hard right to the end of the season. The Dons closed the season with two big wins from which Henik took great satisfaction: "Defeating College Park 85-76 after losing to them earlier in the season by over 30 points and then beating Las Lomas 65-62 on senior night, the first time I beat my former team, was a great way to end the season and is certainly something to build on."

Henik is counting on the core of sophomores (Scott Ruegg, Jackson Aris-dumas, Joey Carillo, Austin Kinnear) on this year's team to be the foundation for next year: "Scott was a captain this year. He played with such enthusiasm and joy, he's a pleasure to coach. He is confident and poised and is not afraid of the moment. With improved defense and taking the ball to the rack better, he will be a complete player. Not only that, he is a positive influence on and off the court and is involved in leadership and extra-curricular activities at school. He embodies what we look for in a student-athlete." Carillo was the fourth leading scorer and was second on the team in rebounds and Kinnear will continue to provide good height.

Aris-dumas won the most improved player award though serving as a backup all season. "Jackson scored 20 points in the victory over College Park," said Henik. "He has an aggressive, football mentality and is a super competitor. He plays with no fear. I'm looking for the sophomores to have a good off-season."

Henik has already set a goal for next season: "We still have to be able to match up and beat Campolindo."



Jayson Fernbacher



Scott Ruegg, Acalanes and Niyi Olabode, Miramonte



Carter Mahaney



From left: Harry Davis, Matt Meredith and Joey Carrillo

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