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Lamorinda boys soccer wrap-up

By John T. Miller



Nick Geannacopulos, Acalanes Photos Gint Federas

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Boys high school soccer in the area continues to be tremendously competitive, with all three local schools - Campolindo, Acalanes, and Miramonte - making it to the North Coast Section playoffs this year. Here's a rundown of each of their seasons and a brief preview of next year's hopes.

Campolindo (20-4-2; 10-2 league)

Head coach Shane Carney, who took last year off for the birth of his daughter, returned to lead the Cougars to a Diablo Athletic League title and a No. 2 seed in the NCS playoffs.

Their season ended with a 2-1 loss in the quarterfinals to (No. 7) Sir Francis Drake. Despite the disappointing end, the season represented tremendous improvement from the year before when the team won only two league games.

Campolindo was one of the highest scoring teams in the Bay Area, breaking the school record for number of goals in a season with 78. Senior Jose Carra-Hernandez led the league in scoring (14 goals, 9 assists) and was named the league's Offensive MVP. Another senior, Nathan Links was third in scoring (14 goals, 4 assists).

First team all-leaguer Connor Gregg, a senior, was named the team's Defensive MVP.

The team graduated 16 seniors, but according to Carney, "We kept 27 on the squad so we hope to improve and be a contender by the end of next season.

Kellen Clancy (8 goals, 10 assists), a starter since his freshman year, will lead the offense next year, while anchoring the defense will be center back Jamiel Liu.

After splitting time in the goalie box with senior Lucas Allen, Joe Etheridge, who moved into the area this year, will, according to Carney, have the potential to be one of the top goalies in the area.

Vivek Lashkari, who tore his ACL and sat out his junior season, got special mention for his inspirational play, reestablishing himself as a starter and contributing a huge goal line save against Acalanes.

Acalanes (10-4-6; 7-2-3 league)

Much like Campolindo, Acalanes reached the NCS playoffs this year only to lose to a lower seed in the first round. (No.13) Pinole Valley prevailed over the fourth-seeded Dons 2-1.

Paul Curtis, in his 20th year as head coach, helped guide the team to a fourth-place finish in the tough 13-team Diablo League, but was disappointed with their high number of draws (3 in league; 6 overall), saying, "The boys tied a number of very good teams late in the season. They were all exciting matches."

The highlight of the season for Curtis was their comeback victory against Northgate to win the Winter Classic championship, rallying from down 0-3 to win 4-3 in regulation.

Top performers on the year include First Team All-League senior Travis Stevenson (7 goals, 2 assists), and center mid player Nick Geannacopulos, a junior who was named to Second Team All-League.

Curtis mentioned the contribution of his three senior captains, including Eric Voss, an outstanding player in the middle, Bernard Adri, and Stevenson. "They did a great job leading throughout the season," said Curtis. "They brought the team together early and created strong bonds."

The Dons will lose seven seniors - out of 21 varsity members - but will have most of their defenders coming back along with both goalkeepers. Curtis expects great things from starter Will Easley, who will return for his senior season, and backup Owen Myall, who will be a junior next year. The Dons gave up only 7 goals in their 12 league matches.

Curtis looks forward to next year, saying "There is a lot of talent returning along with some strong support coming up from the freshmen and junior varsity who should incorporate well into the team."

Miramonte (9-6-5; 6-4-2 league)

Although finishing in the middle of the pack of the Diablo League, Miramonte head coach Masood Ahmadi pointed to tough games against the top three teams in the league--Las Lomas, Campolindo, and Ygnacio Valley--as indicative of their competitive nature this year.

They were one of only two teams to beat Campolindo in league, and they also put up a strong battle against (No. 1) Albany in the NCS quarterfinals, losing by a 3-1 score.

Ahmadi, in his fifth year at the varsity helm, said the team did well to get to the NCS tournament, and looks to a strong returning squad to continue the program's success.

Leading the team this year were seniors Conor Roemer, a 4-year varsity player Ahmadi credits with being "a great distributor with a tremendous work ethic running our possession-style game," and Luca Argast, another 4-year varsity member who transitioned to outside forward this year. "Both Conor and Luca brought the right mentality to the game along with senior Yusef Mathkour who was an inspiration. We will miss them along with other graduating seniors Charlie McIntyre, Eric Heillmann, and Samuel Morganstein."

Junior Kent Barbir was the team's leading scorer (10 goals, 4 assists) and was named First Team All-League and the team's offensive MVP, while Simon Neuwirth-Stein, a sophomore, made Second Team All-League and was the team's overall MVP. Heillman was named defensive MVP and All League Honorable Mention.

Ahmadi mentioned other strong returning players for next year, including juniors Giovanni Sponzilli and Cayden Weiszmann, and sophomores Finley Jackson, Gregory Kornguth, and Adrien Argast. Jackson was named the Most Improved player.

"We look forward to the future and hope to remain close to the culture we've built in the program," says Ahmadi.



Connor Gregg, Campolindo



Charlie McIntyre, Miramonte



Photo Gint Federas

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