

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Orinda Country Club once again OMPA Champions



Lily Holloway, 10 year old, Meadow Swim Club

Photos Gint Federas

By Jon Kingdon

There are many things to count on – the sun rising in the East, prices continuing to rise and for the 19th straight year, Orinda Country Club won the OPMA Championship. Meadow Swim Club came in second for the fourth straight year and Moraga Valley Pool came in third, placing for the first time since 2015. Moraga Ranch won the award for Most Improved Team and Meadow Swim won the award for the Most Improved Team Without Relays and Orinda Park won the Heidary Sportsmanship Trophy. Elisabeth Butler, swimming for Orinda C.C. was named the outstanding female swimmer and Grant Kurtz, swimming for Moraga Valley was named the outstanding male swimmer.

There has been a singular focus this year at OMPA. Due to a change in the fall starting time for the Lamorinda schools, the final meet this year was not the County Meet but the OMPA, which occurred simultaneously with the County meet at Acalanes. Co-Director Sarah Speron (along with Jen Nakamura) explained how this evolved: “The schools are starting earlier this year to align better with the first semester. Last year, the final exams were given after the holiday break, which was hard on the students. There was no oppor-

tunity to move the OMPA since there was another event last week at Campolindo which precluded moving our meet back a week.”

There’s been no crying over spilt milk from the coaches in not having the opportunity to go to the county meet. “As soon as they moved the county meet to our OMPA meet date, we knew that there would be a conflict,” said Orinda C.C. Head Coach Steve Haufler. “All of our coaches pointed to this meet. It’s been a good summer, though it felt a little short due to the school year starting earlier and not having a county meet.”

Orinda Parks head coach Brad Allen looked on the bright side: “Not going to county made it easier in that we had just this one meet to focus on for the summer. We did make a special deal for those that would have qualified for the county with their times. We would make them feel special, at each home meet, calling them down and recognizing them in front of the whole team.”

Marc Cavallero, Moraga Ranch’s head coach saw an advantage to just focusing on the OMPA: “It’s weird to not go to the county meet. It’s a great accomplishment for the kids that qualify but this year it makes for a nice end point to the season. We’re all putting our eggs in one basket instead of stretching it out over two weeks.”

Regardless of the OMPA results, the coaches saw real positives in their seasons. “It’s been a really good summer,” said Meadow Swims Matt Armanini. “We had our best group of 8-and-unders in the five years I’ve been here. We got a lot of young swimmers this year, which we have been waiting for. We have a lot of depth in both the girls and the guys. It’s been a nice surprise and we look forward to their development.”

Trevor Rose, Moraga Valley Pool’s head coach saw their season’s success on different levels: “We’ve had the biggest team in our history (284). Competitive athletics is important but I would also say a good family feel and positive environment is more important especially when you’re working with kids. I appreciate everything about the team from the little kid that swims for the first time to the older kid that wins an event. It’s all part of the process.”

At the other end, Miramonte had the smallest team with 74 swimmers. Head coach Eddie Lee sees great potential in the team’s future: “Our younger kids have been very strong which is awesome for the future of the team. We had seven 6-and-under breaststrokers in the top 25. Evelyn Gaffney broke five pool records this summer and broke the OMPA record on Saturday. A number of our swimmers would have gone to county but OMPA has been our focus.”

All of the teams speak about the family feeling among its members. For Sleepy Hollow’s Matt Ehrenberger, it’s both figurative and literally that way: “My oldest son, Justin, graduated last year and my middle son, Nathan, is 16 and my daughter, Bailey, is 9 years old. It’s always nice to see them swim. It’s been a good summer though a little short. We

never had our whole team in place for much of the summer so it nice to have everyone here at this meet. We’re a different team than we’ve been in the past with new kids trying to step up and fill the shoes of those who have graduated. It’s time for the next wave of Sleepy Hollow legends to step up and take over the leadership role.”

In her second year as head coach of Moraga Country Club, Tiffany Forbes feels she has the team pointed in the right direction: “There had been a few years of turmoil at our club that is over and done and we’re on an upward trajectory. We’re small but we’re mighty. Our swimmers love this meet a lot more than they love county. With five great senior coaches and about 30 junior coaches, we had a really solid and motivated staff.” Forbes singled out 10-year-old Ellis Culleton and 9-year-old J.T. Gett as two to look out for down the road.

Tatiana Gessling of Campolindo Cabana had her team focus on OMPA along with team individual times: “As a group, I’m really proud of how hard they’ve all worked. They have individual goals but as a team we would try to get 500 points and then we bumped it to 1,000 and now we’re trying to get to 1,500. We’ve been training for OMPA and this was definitely our number one priority.”

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Luke Childers, 9 yo, Moraga Valley Pool

Campolindo named the Division III School of the Year by Cal-Hi Sports



Emmanuel Callas

By Jon Kingdon

Cal-Hi Sports has selected its State Schools of the Year for their athletic programs, and for the sixth time since 2005 and the third time this decade, Campolindo was chosen as the Division III School of the Year. Mark Tennis, the co-founder and publisher of the paper, chooses the teams himself: “Campo was a fairly easy winner,” he explained. “They have been very good in a number of different sports and they’re always in the mix.”

In its announcement, Cal-Hi cited Campolindo’s boys basketball team winning the state tournament, along with the success of the boys and girls cross country teams, the boys and girls swimming teams and the boys volleyball team. “Besides these teams,” says Tennis, “the school is solid in just about everything else.”

Campolindo Athletic Director Shannon Rogers spoke glowingly of the award: “The D3 State School of the Year Award is truly an honor. It reflects the deep commitments of our student-athletes, their parents, the school community and the community as a whole. Our student-athletes and their supporters balance tremendous effort and achievement in athletics, academics and holistically as humans – that is the deeper significance of the award!”



Natalie Arnsward

Photos Gint Federas