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## Miramonte and Campo girls water polo heartbreak

By Jon Kingdon

With a 20-6 record, Miramonte was only an 8-6 loss to Acalanes in the NCS finals and 9-8 loss to Sacred Heart in the NorCal semifinals from having a truly memorable season. Head coach Lance Morrison and the team had trouble accepting the loss to Sacred Heart: "Everybody deep down was a little bummed with that loss as we wanted to make it back to the final game, but we're still very proud to have made it to the final four."

Of their six losses, five were by two goals or less and the biggest differential was by four goals. "Nothing came easy for us and we had to work for every bit of success that we got," said Morrison. "We had to buckle down and learn from all of our failures and the team did that in stride."

Seniors Sally Fellner and Chloe Morrison were mainstays in the pool and Fiona Young was the utility player that filled the gaps for every position.

Sophomore Lindsay Lucas stepped in at goal and, says Morrison, "was a rock and in my opinion, the best goalie in the area. We had games where she just kept us in the fight. I couldn't be more proud of her. Her talent just speaks for itself."

The one word that Morrison felt described his team was perseverance: "We have a lot of young players that had to step up big and we asked them to fill big roles. We have a foundation for next year. Our seniors put in the work, energy and focus in with our underclassmen and this is going to pay dividends for us next year."

After graduating 12 seniors, seven of whom were either first or second team all-league and only four seniors on this year's team, the Campolindo team was a work in progress from the start. Head coach Kim Everist felt it was important for the team to "make progress and grow right from the beginning. Starting the season off 13-2 was a good indication that lessons were quickly learned. The Cougars made it to the semifinals of the NCS tournament and qualified for the NorCal tournament losing to Davis in overtime by a score of 7-6. Everist reactions to the game and the season were ones of extremes: "Everybody was heartbroken after leaving it all out in the pool. I was just super proud of them."

With two freshmen and three sophomores on the roster, the four seniors, co-captains Lola Cirulli and Nina Munson, along with Haley Hunter and Marissa Ennis proved crucial to bringing the team together, said Everist: "Our seniors had a good challenge and helped bring along a really young group. Each of them at some point stood up and bore the weight of the team on their shoulders. They were just so full of life." The play of senior goalie Haley Hunter, starting for the first time, was a key to the team's success, giving up an average of only 7.6 goals per game. "Haley definitely stepped up and I'm so proud of her," said Everist. "I only have great things to say about her."

It took a team meeting for the Cougars to come together and play to Everist's satisfaction: "When we got everyone on the same page after a team meeting, my team came out and battled and I realized that we had a very special group and expectations jumped for our team, raising the bar. We were in the top 3-4 the entire season, which speaks to the confidence the team had. They were young in a lot of ways but they were super gritty."

Everist saw a number of players really step up their games - Munson-"a brilliant shooter," Tallulah Clancy-"bore a lot at the center position," Maggie Hawkins-"a force at both ends of the pool," Cirulli-"our primary center defender matching up against our best opponents and Kaia Levenfeld-"filled some key roles this year."

Everist is already looking forward to next season with a great deal of optimism: "This team was transformative. I did not know what type of team we would have and we eventually found ourselves, getting a three seed in the NCS tournament. The growth of the team was exponential. With a young and experienced team, it should really serve us well for the future."

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