

LAMORINDA SPORTS

After NCS Championship win, Cougars go on to win NorCal Championship



Photos Gint Federas



Soren Jensen



West Temkin



Brock Zamanian

By Jon Kingdon

Campolindo head coach Miles Price put together a schedule for his team that would have tested the heartiest of souls, competing against the top teams in Southern California, compiling an 8-8 record but losing only four more games (three to Miramonte) the rest of the season. "You want to take your punches during the regular season to prepare yourselves for the NCS and NorCal tournaments," said Price. "It was a hard schedule and I probably wouldn't do it again like that but it did prepare our guys. Each game was challenging and we learned a different lesson each time."

Soren Jensen, who will be playing for Stanford next year, attributed the success of the team to how well they played together: "The key to our success was teamwork. We lost five starters from last year but a lot of us have been together since the 12-and-unders and we worked really hard and wanted to win and we came together to win it."

"Our defense was excellent," said Price. West Temkin was our anchor in the goal and there were no leaks in the defense. There was great communication on our side of the pool."

It was a combination of upper and lower classmen that led to the success of the team, according to Price: "Soren and Paul McGuire really came into their own and played to their potential. We got what we expected from our seniors and we had a lot of younger guys like juniors

Brock Zamanian and Caleb Boggan who really anchored the middle of our lineup. All of our guys have stepped up the last four weeks and come together as a unit. We had to figure out who worked well together and once we got that, everyone seemed to play well around one another."

Jensen gives much of the credit to Price: "Miles has been great. He's helped me so much from when I was a freshman on the varsity and helped our team tremendously."

In only his second season at Acalanes, head coach Robbie Arroyo was able to take a team that was 8-9 last season, to the victory stand in the Division II NCS Championships with a victory over College Park by a score of 16-10. With the No. 1 seed, the Dons got a bye in the first round and then defeated Redwood (14-11) and Tamalpais (10-9) prior to the win over College Park.

Dripping wet after the compulsory leap into the pool with his team after the win, Arroyo attributed the victory to the process of a long season: "We played in a very tough league (Campolindo, Miramonte and Las Lomas) and played some great teams all year and it definitely prepared us for this moment. Mac Darren scored the majority of the goals in the championship game, but it was a team effort from top to bottom."

Though losing in the first round of the NorCal Division tournament to Clovis, Arroyo's great satisfaction was "bringing the team back to the tradi-

tion of winning. This is a great group of kids that wanted to be successful. They came in every day and worked hard. They were able to come together and do it when it mattered."

With a 6-0 record in a very competitive league with Acalanes, Campolindo and Las Lomas, it all came down to a matter of three goals that would prove to be the difference in two playoff games. The Matadors defeated Campolindo three times during the regular season but came up short in the NCS championship game against the Cougars by a score of 8-6. In the NorCal tournament, Miramonte lost to San Ramon Valley by a score of 17-16 in the semifinals, preventing a fifth matchup against Campolindo for the championship.

"Senior co-captain Jackson Painter led the way," said head coach James Lathrop, "and a lot of guys stepped up. Blake Hoover and William Thomas may have gone unnoticed but their main role was on defense and they did a great job anchoring that area."

Despite the tournament losses, Lathrop felt the overall work of his team was responsible for the overall success of the team: "It's been a really great senior group and they did a great job in leading the team. Everyone did a nice job in having fun but pushing and challenging each other to get better and working together with everyone willing to sacrifice when called upon. Everything really derived around the team concept."

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 Hunter, 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."