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## All Lamorinda girls basketball teams make NCS - Miramonte heads to state tournament

By Jon Kingdon



Jordan Allred, Miramonte Photo Gint Federas

Ashley Thoms, both who went on to play Division I basketball, had a long year with the Cougars finishing the year with a 7-19 record, 1-9 in league.

It was not a time for the players to feel sorry for themselves, said Kirby: "We had a lot of seniors that bounced back from last year. They had a great attitude and were great leaders." Campolindo improved this season with a 16-11 record while going 5-5 in league play

As a three seed in the NCS, Campolindo received a bye in the first round and then defeated Eureka 62-51 in the second round before losing to the No. 2 seed, San Marin in the semifinals 55-46, missing out on the opportunity to make it to the state tournament.

Forwards Emily Marsten and Allie Korth and guards Kate Brown and Olivia De Paschalis, all seniors, were keys to the success this year. "They all did a great job and are going to be missed, particularly Kate because she did everything," said Kirby.

Kirby is confident in the foundation of younger players to rely on to continue the team's success into next year. The team's strength is going to be in the front court led by upcoming seniors Kiana Thorson and Meg Larsen for their ability and leadership.

Allie Cummins had a dominating freshman year and should also provide leadership next year though she will only be a sophomore, says Kirby: "Allie was just superb on so many levels."

There were two other freshmen that also contributed this year and are expected to continue to show improvement next year - forward Camille Yabu and guard Ava Garcia. "Camille showed a lot of potential and made some big strides. Ava brought a lot of energy and played hard."

Acalanes

Led by a triumvirate of seniors, Lauren Kobashigawa, Lauren Frechman and Kaylee Pond, Acalanes had a 56-26 record over the last two seasons, going 24-6 in league play (19-1 over the last two years). The Dons finished this year with a 21-7 record, concluding the year with an overtime loss to Redwood 74-64.

Head coach Michelle Sasaki did not hold back in her admiration for the team: "You could arguably say that they were one of the best teams that has been at Acalanes, as a group because of what they have accomplished together. The previous teams did not have that type of success even though they may have

At the start of every basketball season, it's the goal of each team to make it to the NCS playoffs. Miramonte in the Open Division, Acalanes in Division 2, Campolindo in Division 3 and Bentley in Division 5 all met that initial goal.

Miramonte, in their second year as an independent team, playing a highly competitive schedule, finished the regular season with a 21-5 record, qualifying for the open division. There they took on what has become a personal nemesis, Bishop O'Dowd in the first round. Despite defeating O'Dowd earlier in the season by a score of 79-63, the Matadors lost in the rematch 57-50.

This was the third time that Bishop O'Dowd has defeated Miramonte in four games over the last two years. Last year, O'Dowd defeated Miramonte in the NCS championship game and in the state tournament. Though coming up short in the NCS tournament, because they were in the open division, the Matadors were automatically given a spot in the state tournament which commences 12 days after their early exit from the NCS tournament.

Campolindo

In his first season last year, Campolindo head coach Matt Kirby, following the graduation of Haley Van Dyke and

had the talent. It's a testament to how unselfish they all were, playing and maximizing into their roles. To go back to back as league champions and do it better than what they did last year, that is a feat, in and of itself. Everybody chases you after you get the first one but then to say that we have some unfinished business and we feel that we can go undefeated and they did to come through it and that is to me a testament as to how strong willed this team was. It's one of the best team that Acalanes has ever had. It's been over 20 years since any Acalanes team has gone back to back."

With five seniors and a nine-girl roster, the underclassmen for the Dons got a lot of playing time which should ease the transition to next season. Grace Gephardt and Gabby Schneider will be four year lettermen next year and will be the leaders on the team. "We're expecting big things from Gabby next year. Grace has been a key component since she started as a freshman. This year, she averaged 18 points and 12 rebounds and just kept improving. She really understands the game and is the best post player in the league. She can hit the 3-point, show post moves, get rebounds, block shots. She fills up the stat sheet."

Freshmen Emily Du and Isabella Aris-Dumas held up well against varsity competition, said Sasaki: "Emily has the athleticism to compete at any level. She's very good at penetrating and getting to the basket. I'm looking forward to her adding to what she has and being more confident as she steps up into the next season with a lot more responsibility and being more assertive. Isabelle got good experience and will know the system and should be more confident and productive next year."

Sasaki is hoping for a larger turnout of players for the team next year to share in what came out of this season: "When you have to take that journey and endure all of those challenges and obstacles and persevere and still be chased by everyone in the league, that to me is resilience, a commitment to team and that's what was most impressive about this team."

Bentley

Bentley head coach Kelly Thomas has now led the team to the NCS tournament for three straight years, having made it to the second round in 2018 and 2019. Bentley finished this season with a 15-11 record, going 8-4 in league play but lost in the first round of the tournament to Sonoma Academy.

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