

Published April 28th, 2021

Continuing domination for Lamorinda girls water polo

By Jon Kingdon



Maggie Hawkins, Campolindo and Alex Mould,
Acalanes Photo Gint Federas

no scrimmages or full contact, said Acalanes coach Misha Buchel. "We're using the early part of the season to shake off the mental and physical rust, getting the muscle memory back and getting back to processing information quickly when they're in the water."

With such a compressed season, Miramonte coach Lance Morrison knew that the team would have to hit the ground running. "We're doing our best to get organized, having to adapt and roll with what we have," Morrison said. "There is a certain energy on the team right now. We're not taking any moment for granted."

Campolindo coach Kim Everist attacked the changes head-on. "We had a team meeting and explained how everything about this year is about being adaptable and adjusting," Everist said. "I just really want everyone to have a great time with the team and building off of that."

Acalanes

There are two numbers that stand out for Acalanes: 59 (5-0 this season) - the team's consecutive win streak - and 1,266, the number of days since their last loss on Nov. 8, 2017.

Even with several all-league returning players, the graduation of three-time All-American Jewel Roemer has left a big hole for Acalanes. "Jewel directed the traffic in the pool, and this has left a void to be filled," Buchel said. "That void is going to be filled by everyone through communication and action."

There are seven first and second team all-league players returning to the team: Ava Donleavy, Claire Rowell, Alana McCartney, Marty Beth Heffelfinger, Alex Mould, Heidi Heffelfinger and Caroline Schirmer.

Buchel will be calling on his players to play both offense and defense. "Our versatility has been a real asset and we still have the players that can do multiple things," Buchel said. "Our defenders can post up and our outside shooters can defend. Claire is the best counterattack player in our section. Alana is our 'Swiss army knife' being able to do a little bit of everything. Heidi is big, strong, and fast and will provide us with the height that we've had in the past. Caroline and Alex are our primary defenders who can play both ends of the pool."

Donleavy, a four-year starter was chosen co-outstanding goalie of the league last year. "Ava's strength is her ability to direct traffic along with her goalie skills," Buchel said. "She is a great shot blocker and has a great range of passing. We've never had a big game where she was flat or off her game. She always brings it."

Miramonte

Morrison is keeping Miramonte's eyes on the prize. "We're going to be a good, competitive team," Morrison said. "Ever since we won the NCS in 2017, we've been trying to build back into that caliber. We're going to be a good, competitive team and we're going to have a lot of success."

Morrison's game plan is simple: "We're going to let the pieces fall where they may but we're going to remember one thing: "We're a team and nothing works unless we all work together."

This is a young team with a lot of experience. Two sophomores had outstanding freshman seasons: Lindsay

It was Mark Twain that said, "There are lies, damned lies and statistics" to describe the persuasive power of numbers. From 2016 to 2019 the numbers for the Lamorinda girls water polo teams are not only persuasive but overwhelming. The won-loss records for Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte was a composite 254-64 for a winning percentage of 79.8%. The percentage jumps to 92.7% when the results within the Lamorinda spectrum are removed. Throw in four straight playoff appearances for each, three undefeated seasons and NCS championships (Acalanes-2, Miramonte-1), and the success of water polo in Lamorinda has been unstoppable.

Did someone say coronavirus? This forced a 499-day hiatus from the last game in 2019 to the first practice of the 2020 season (Actually April 5, 2021). The extended layoff and limited preseason, forced an adjustment for each team's preparation. We had some camps but had

Lucas was the co-outstanding goalie of the year and Meghan McAninch was chosen second team all-league. "Lindsay is solid in every way," Morrison said. "She's consistent and doesn't let anything rattle her. She's determined, fierce and does not let things get her out of her zone. Meghan is very gifted on offense but is also an all-around player. She is very intense and competitive."

Seniors Fiona Young (1st team all-league) and Mackenzie Murphy (2nd team all-league) are key players on offense. "We're really excited to have Fiona out there to lead the team. She will be facilitating a lot of our offense and keeping us organized on defense. Mackenzie did a lot for us last year. Sophomores Aly Lurie and Dena Ennis are both good post-up players."

With the short preseason there are a lot of positions that are not set, Morrison said: "We're looking to get everybody a role. Nothing happens unless we learn to work together. We have a lot of players that are going to contribute."

Still, it's his senior class that Morrison is counting on to provide the leadership and stability on the team. Along with Young and Murphy, Morrison highlighted Courtney Coleman, Anna Hillen, Kate Rochio and Devon Byrne for recognition. "They have all contributed four years to the team and our program wouldn't be what it is if it wasn't for their effort and sacrifice."

Campolindo

With transfers and freshmen on the Campolindo roster, developing a familiarity among the players was the first goal for coach Everist. "We're talking a lot about getting to know each other and they all seem to get along with each other," Everist said. "They're open minded and they all want to learn."

With everything else going on, Everist learned that the team did not have a goalie on the roster. Sophomore Shayne Clancy, a field player, stepped up and has been quickly developing as the team's goalie. "Shayne had never played in the goal before and opted to fill that role," Everist said. "We went through this with Haley Hunter (now playing at Indiana) who was also a field player. Shane is super competitive and is really composed without highs and lows. She has done a great job in her first two games and she may have found her calling."

The offense is led by Tallulah Clancy who was all-league as a junior and will be playing for Brown next year. "Tallulah is very offensive minded and a great leader," Everist said. "She loves to post up and enjoys the contact and physicality that really gets her going along."

Senior Reese Whipple has been a force inside. Maddie Sumner, who will be playing for UC Davis next year, is a lefty playing on the 4-5 side. Maggie Hawkins has been very strong on defense but, according to Everist, "She has to make things happen in the front court as well."

If there was a positive to the coronavirus, it allowed Elizabeth McGrath who was coming off an injury and would not have been able to play in the fall to recover and be able to play in the spring.

Two freshmen, London Menard and Grace Gafni, will be getting playing time this season. "They've done a really nice job so far," Everist said. "As they keep improving, they're going to be playing more."

What's been most important to Everist and the team is just being in the pool. "We want to make the most of every moment," Everist said. "I just really want to have a great time with the team and I'm building off that. We're going to play, improve and compete. We only can control what we can control."



Alexa Carter, Acalanes



Shayne Clancy, Campolindo goalie Photos Gint Federas



#14 Kaia Levenfeld, Campolindo

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA