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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Lamorinda boys' basketball leads the way in talented DAL



#2 Chase Bennett, Campolindo and #23 Noah Bloch, Acalanes Photo Gint Federas

By Jon Kingdon

If you want to find any type of positive from the coronavirus, it would be the newfound appreciation in participatory sports. This was true even when the teams were prevented from practicing indoors.

Miramonte practiced outside with no contact and no defense, focusing on skill work, footwork, and shooting. "The best thing we got from working outdoors was a sense of gratitude," said Miramonte head coach Chris Lavdiotis. "The team was able to connect with their teammates and the coaches."

For Acalanes head coach Sol Henik, just being on the courts after all everyone has been through and is going through is half the battle. "We're very grateful that we have a season despite all of the challenges," Henik said. "I see the gratefulness and patience of the players and parents who have gone through these obstacles." **Campolindo**

Campolindo and head coach Steven Dyer have continued their success from the past two seasons (53-13) winning their first nine games, defeating Bishop O'Dowd last Saturday, playing mostly without all-star junior Aidan Mahaney who left early with a hand injury, having only recently returned to the team from an ankle injury, and sophomore Loren Robinson who has been sidelined with a hip injury. The slack has been picked up by all-league senior Emmanuel Callas, and Chase and Cade Bennett who have stepped up in their absence.

"Emmanuel has improved a lot and has done a great job on the court and in his role as a leader," Dyer said. "Chase is our hardest worker. He and Cade are good shooters and Cade has been our most improved player."

Center Matt Radell (6'6") has been solid inside and sophomore guard Shane O'Reilly has been averaging 10.5 points per game. "Shane has had to step up and he's done a great job," Dyer said. "He is talented and has

risen to the challenge."

"We're playing a 7- to 8-man rotation and we'll get deeper when Aiden and Logan get back," Dyer said. "We're shooting fairly well and have done a good job in not turning the ball over. We can always get better defensively, and our shot selection can also improve."

As league play commences, Dyer appreciates the quality of the teams in the Diablo Athletic League: "This is one of the best leagues in Northern California and it's underrated. Acalanes and Miramonte are always good along with the rest of the teams in our league and it's going to be really competitive."

Miramonte

With a 4-2 record, Miramonte is heading into the heart of their league season with optimism. Miramonte head coach Chris Lavdiotis has not allowed the pandemic to prevent him from expanding his team's offense. "We're using a faster style and more of a 5-out offense," said Lavdiotis. "Playing outdoors gave us a sense of grit and our guys are in really good shape."

Leading the team in all areas on the court has been senior Niya Olabode, averaging 15.2 points, 6.4 rebounds and 3.4 assists per game. "Niya has really grown into his game this year," Lavdiotis said. "He plays all the positions but is primarily playing the 2-3-4 spots. He is aggressive and his shooting has really improved."

The Matadors have a lot of size inside, led by center Caden Breznikar. "Caden's a real battler inside and is capable of hitting from 3-point range," Lavdiotis said. "He is great to have on the team."

Ryan Schwarz (11.5) and Tyler Dutto (13.7) have proven to be an effective scoring combination. "Ryan has gotten really good at running the show at a nice speed and Tyler can do it as well," Lavdiotis said. "They complement each other, and both are good finishers going to the basket." Sophomore guard Ethan Conley was being counted on to play this season but suffered a torn labrum and will be sup-

porting the team from the bench.

Besides Breznikar, Andre Sidlauskis and James Frye have been forces inside. "Andrew has done yeoman's work inside and James is very good around the rim," Lavdiotis said. "I've also got a ton of 3-point shooters with Olabode, Schwarz, Frye, Dutto and Ben Murphy."

Acalanes

The Dons have begun the season with a 4-3 record. Acalanes head coach Sol Henik took a different approach to the preseason with his players. "I took the opportunity to watch Saint Mary's College practices, videos and talking to their coaches. I picked up some offensive schemes and concepts that I am putting into our offensive repertoire."

Practice time for Henik has been limited to 1.5 hours a day. "I know the season is somewhat dedicated, so the seniors and I want to make sure that we have time to practice," Henik said. "We have a good process in place, and this will lead to more wins and losses. With that said, I really like this team."

The Don's backcourt is talented with a good depth. Jackson Aris-Dumas is the team's point guard along with several talented shooters, led by Scott Ruegg (15.0) along with Graham Smith and freshman Marcus Robinson. "Scott is a great leader that brings the team together," Henik said. "Graham has a great basketball IQ and is a very accurate shooter and Marcus shoots the ball with extreme confidence and accuracy."

The front court is led by sophomore 6'8" Jake Davis (7.2 rpb) and 6'5" Tyler Murphy. "Jake has shown great improvement so far," Henik said. "He's a huge part of our team. Tyler has shown stretches of brilliance with low post moves and playing great help side defense. We have a lot more size this year and we can use that to our advantage."

Henik is aware how tough league play is this year: "All the schools are tough where you can't look past anybody. We are emphasizing on just improving every single day."

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