

# Lamorinda boys' soccer leading in competitive Diablo League



50 - Alejandro Canales. 17 - Mason Fish



Photos Liza Marie Narido 17-Luke Olsen, 10 - Rhett Skvarna. 16 - Jack Alcalay

## By Jon Kingdom

Unlike the basketball teams that are at their busiest over the Christmas holiday and New Year's, playing in the various tournaments during that period, the soccer teams make it a point to avoid playing games at that time. "Our philosophy is to not put any additional pressure on our players," Acalanes head coach Paul Curtis said. "When you schedule games during the school breaks, it's a time many of the families want to do things such as visiting relatives and traveling. Restricting the kids during this period is totally unfair to them, so we don't do that."

### Acalanes

With a 7-2-1 record, the winter break did the Dons no harm. With 20 juniors and seniors on the roster, there are too many leaders to mention. The co-captains on the team are midfielders Rhett Skvarna, Matt Walner, and defender Jacob Hill.

"Rhett has not played yet due to off-season knee surgery," Curtis said. "Regardless, he's been a strong leader and will be a four-year letterman. Matt, also a four-year varsity player is the hardest worker on the team. He has found his voice and has matured into what we thought he would be when he came in as a freshman. Jacob is the voice of the team and has a lot of character. He has a wonderful personality, is extremely resilient and is a natural born leader."

Junior Dylan Olson and sophomore Jake Boselli are splitting time in the goal and together are giving up less than one goal a game with a combined six shutouts. "Both of them are winners and extremely athletic," Curtis said. "They know what winning looks and feels like and are very good communicators."

The list of defenders goes seven deep led by Daniel Adri

and Mason Fish. "They are our primary center backs with great depth behind them," Curtis said.

There are two freshmen that have contributed immediately, defender Eitan Romick and striker Jonathan Roth (younger brother of midfielder Eli Roth). "Both of them are playing well," Curtis said. "Eitan is a good defender that has seen a lot of playing time and is coming along nicely. Jonathan is dangerous playing on the outside mid-field. Both he and Eli are great attackers."

There is still room for improvement, according to Curtis: "The team is developing as to who they are. We're split between the seniors and the rest of the team which in my mind is an ideal situation because we have the older kids teaching the underclassmen about the program and why we do things the way that we do and that just helps to maintain the integrity of the program."

### Miramonte

Defense has been the name of the game for the 4-0-1 Matadors. Though they have only scored seven goals, they have only given up one goal, 0.2 goals/game. The domination on defense begins with goalie Grant Scanlan.

"Grant has been amazing in goal for us as he was last year," head coach Masood Ahmadi said. "He's a great shot stopper with great size and confidence. He also has good feet which allows us to use him as another field player in the games."

The back line is very talented led by seniors captain Henry Hill, center back Miles Ownes and the brother duo of Graham Ballantyne (Jr) and Brant Ballantyne (soph). "Henry has been a great leader on and off the field. His confidence on the ball along with Miles allows us to maintain possession through the matches and play our style of soccer. Graham and Brant

both can play fullback and are great defenders but can also get up the field and be an attacking threat, to either score or give assists as wingers. Brant has also taken on a leadership role as one of the younger players on the team with both his play and being vocal at trainings and games. Sophomores new to the team, Aiden Rascher and James MacKenzie, have both done a good job at fullback/outside defenders as well."

The goals and assists among the players have been spread throughout the team. The midfielders are a solid group with Jonas Dao (Sr), Nick Govea (Jr) and Riley Coover. "Jonas is calm, cool and collected but will surprise with his flair and speed," Ahmadi said. "Nick transitioned from center back/fullback to midfielder and winger. His technical ability has allowed us to use him more on offense this year. Riley is our holding midfielder. He is intelligent with the ball and knows how to win tackles in the midfield. He is as important to our defense as he is in keeping the ball for our offense."

There have been some pleasant surprises for Ahmadi with senior center forward Ethan Haines, after playing three years for the JV team and Noah Rabinovitz and Eli Leal-Schuma. "Ethan has been solid filling in at center forward and I'm looking forward to seeing Noah and Eli get solid minutes and experience at this level and thrive."

Optimism abounds for Ahmadi at the potential for the team: "The possibilities are endless for this group. If they continue to trust in one another and believe in how we want to play, we'll have a great year. We just need to stay patient with the process and not get ahead of ourselves, by focusing on one game at a time, which will be a key factor. Staying healthy will help as well."

### Campolindo

It's a homecoming for Campolindo's first year head coach Stefan Clemens. Having graduated from Campolindo in 2004, Clemens was a four-year letterman for the soccer team, going on to play at UC Santa Cruz. He brings a great deal of experience having coached at the Lamorinda Soccer Club, Cal State East Bay, Los Positas J.C., and the University of California.

Clemens bases his philosophy on TOVO (total football in Dutch) which seeks to define the characteristics of ideal football and a set of prescriptive techniques for player development.

For Clemens, "It's all about soccer IQ and understanding your spacing with your teammates and opponents off the ball so that when you get the ball, your decision making is at a very high level."

Despite coming in late as the team's coach this year, Clemens has come to appreciate the quality of his team. "I have a really good group of players. They are passionate and they don't give up, being able to problem solve in mid-game. They have been positive and responsive and have enjoyed the training and intensity that I have brought to the training and games. I had an individual meeting with every player, and I've received a lot of positive feedback."

The offense is led by senior captain, center mid Will Ruskin, junior captain, center mid Luke Olsen and senior midfielder Nauder Maghsoodnia. "They all bring a lot to the team in skill and talent. Will is a major standout as our leading scorer and assist man," Clemens said. "He is very technical and an extremely smart player. Luke is very technical and smart and is a good distributor and Nauder is also very smart, making good decisions. He is dangerous with the ball and does great in maintaining contact."

The goalie position is split between freshman Luc Narido and junior Ryan Sintchak. Narido generally starts the game and Sintchak takes over in the second half. "Luc is very technical, good with his feet, passing and is a good shot blocker," Clemens said. "He's tall and strong and age doesn't matter to me as long as someone show competency. Ryan is very good at closing games for us with his leadership and vocal skills."

The defensive backs are led by a senior Aiden Paul and a freshman Sean Mungunshagai. "I coached Aiden in club," Clemens said. "He is big, strong, good in the air and as a one-on-one defender. Sean has not missed a minute. He is our anchor in IQ and patience, calming the team down. He has good height and is so good with his feet and decision-making. He is a distributor that gives us more space in his passing."

The other defensive backs are right back Douglas Ellery and Mason Fara. "Doug is strong with a good long ball to initiate attacks. He is a gritty player that will block shots with his chest and his face. He is a full game player that never gives up. Mason is a lightning bolt that is the fastest player in the league. We would be lost without him because he is a good cover defender and is able to clean up mistakes."

The one area that Clemens is looking for the team to improve is in finishing. "Our first two-thirds of the field are very good in possessions and positional play," Clemens said. "We need to improve on crossing and finishing, sending in a dangerous cross, putting pressure on the goalkeeper and giving us the opportunity to deflect it into the goal. We're looking to score two or more goals in a game and getting higher up the field, occupying more dangerous spaces."

# Lamorinda girls' soccer – positives on the pitch

... continued from Page C1

"We are really deep on this line with Sammy Hess (Sr), Taylor Carlin (Jr), Avery Ives (Soph) and Demi Woods (Fr)."

With the early season success, Barbarino does not want the team to get overconfident: "We never want to get complacent. The girls know what I expect of them, and they also hold each other accountable. We're working on positivity and understanding that not everything will be positive and how do we turn negative situations into positives. It's just about creating an environment where they have fun."

### Campolindo

After eight games, Campolindo remains undefeated with a record of 5-0-3. The frustration at having only an abbreviated season last spring, has only served to motivate the team. "After last season without playoffs, we came into this year ready to jump into competition," head coach Luis Pinto said. "We were eager and prepared with a lot of good players. We have 12 returners, so it's been looking really good."

With 16 seniors and juniors on the team, there is no lack of experience. Heading the offense are senior twin sisters, Mia and Ella Colombini, both of whom will be playing for UC Irvine next year. "They were key players last year and are co-captains this year and are our leading scorers," Pinto said. "They do a great job supporting each other with both lining up as attacking midfielders. Mylie Jaquet, a freshman, is also a player that has made a big impact on the team. She was shy but feisty and has made a big difference blending in very quickly with the team. Senior co-captain center back, Sami Kolin (who will be playing for Cal State Northridge next year) has been a great passer so that when she wins the ball, she has the freedom to drive up and set up her teammates."

The defense has only given up 14 goals and is led by senior goalie Marissa Karver and her backup junior Anna Mooradian. "Marissa has been on the team since her freshman year, and this is her first year as a starter. She is very

humble and a hard worker," Pinto said. "She is a great communicator with the back line. She is very competitive and can be hard on herself. Ana has been getting some playing time which will help her next season." Besides Kolin, seniors Ainsley Murphy and Marion Berzansky have been solid on defense as well.

Pinto's key to be successful the rest of the season? "We need to stay humble, keep working hard, respecting our opponents and always pointing towards the next game."

### Miramonte

The Matadors are also a very mature team with 16 juniors and seniors out of the 23 players on the roster. With 12 of the players having at least one goal or one assist, it's a number that McQuaid appreciates: "I want as many different players scoring or assisting."

Co-captains Julia Hunt and Avery Welch lead the offense. Two freshmen, Olivia Penney and Katrina White, are lining up as both strikers and wings and have contributed immediately. "They

have good speed, ball control and the talent to play," McQuaid said. "Olivia has some wonderful assists playing out on the wing with some great crosses. Katrina plays more of a striker role, playing with her back to the goal and it's great to see her being able to play that way."

Co-captain and goalie Rowan Blacklock has been a leader on defense. "Rowan is a solid player in the net," McQuaid said. "She guides the defense well and has a lot of experience and skills. She sees the plays very nicely and positions herself well and she is not afraid to get physical. She has a commanding presence and we're confident when we have her in the goal."

There is a lot of talent lining up in front of Blacklock led by juniors Tahra Minowada, Addie Cresson and Ellie Foster. "Tahra anchors the defense in the middle," McQuaid said. "Cresson will play the left and right side and is one of our strongest defenders in transition from defense to offense. She has great speed and can dribble without looking at the ball, so

she is really able to see the field, complimenting Tahra nicely. Ellie has also been doing a great job." There is also great depth on defense led by Shauna Lindheim, Izzie Mobley, Sophia Swenson, and Caitlyn Jenkins.

Co-captain Avery Welch, junior Jada Deitrick and sophomores Zoey Rossiter and Asthon Laczkowski lead the midfielders. "The four of them are able to run like crazy," McQuaid said. "They are really strong players and are aggressive on offense and defense."

Though they have started slowly (3-5-1), McQuaid is taking a long-term perspective on the team: "The players are still learning to anticipate what their teammates are doing and that will come with playing together. The girls all get along and like playing with each other. Playing late in February as opposed to early December is just a huge difference. We have a very skilled group of girls and hope that our record will show that as the season develops."