

Acalanes girls soccer comes up short in 1-0 loss to Branson in NCS Championship

By Jon Kingdon

It was anticipated that the Acalanes (20-1) and Branson (20-3-1) game on Feb. 26 was going to be a defensive struggle. Each team led with defenses that averaged giving up only .33 goals per game.

As it turned out, an early goal by Branson, the only goal of the game, set the tone, but it was not without controversy.

Acalanes had an early scoring opportunity when Branson's goalkeeper was caught out of position. Addie Bailey took a shot and what appeared to all but the officials, a Branson defender jumped up and with her hands blocked Bailey's shot from going in, depriving the Dons of an early penalty shot.

Acalanes head coach Nick Barbarino made his feelings known to the officials. "Obviously, I got upset and I ran down the sideline asking how they could not see was an obvious hands penalty," Barbarino said.

To further the Dons' frustra-

tion, on Branson's next trip down the field, they scored on a corner kick that ended up hitting the cross bar and barely crossing the goal line. That proved to be Branson's last real scoring opportunity.

From that point on, Branson was primarily focused on doing all they could to prevent an Acalanes score and expended little effort in trying to score themselves. "It was really frustrating after Branson scored so early in the game and having to trail by one goal the rest of the day," junior midfielder Tatum Zuber said. "They weren't really playing soccer. They were just trying to take everything out of their half of the field, and it was aggravating because we wanted to play soccer and they were just kicking the ball out of their end of the field."

Barbarino knew that they were facing a tough defense. "They had a very good goalkeeper, and their defense was solid. They were well coached and disciplined and once they got their goal, they were able to sit back a little bit and

make it difficult for us."

The Dons came into the game averaging 4.3 goals per game and had not been shut out all season. It was a day when "close" was the operative term for the Acalanes offense with Addie Bailey, Emmi Cronin and Natalie Means just missing scores. "We had about 10 shots on goal, and we looked like the only team that was going to score from the run of play," Barbarino said. "Some days it's just not your day and today definitely wasn't ours."

The Branson field was not what one would expect to be played on for a championship game. The game moved to the afternoon because the facility had no lights and bleachers had to be brought in for the spectators. It was also a smaller field than Acalanes and most teams were used to playing on. The field was the minimum size allowed at 55 yards wide and 100 yards long, which was 10 yards shorter and 7 yards narrower than the field at Acalanes.

"We had expected the

smaller field but when we first walked up, it really did look like a smaller field," Zuber said. "We had two good practices on Thursday and Friday, and we went into the game with a good idea and sense what the game would be like."

Barbarino accepted the situation, but he did not have to like it: "The smaller field somewhat neutralized a lot of what we like to do but they had to play there as well, so credit to them in getting the goal that they needed."

If there was any consolation for the Dons, it was knowing that after a 3-5-3 season in 2020-21, the Cougars were ranked as the 577th team in California by MaxPreps and heading into the game versus Branson, they had risen to 64th by MaxPreps.

"Last year, we had 16 seniors that had graduated and four players that had their club season overlap with our season, and they didn't want to risk injury, so we basically had a brand-new team last

year," Barbarino said. "It actually worked out well for us because we got a year for the players to get used to each other and have some fun. What last year showed the girls was how you can go from a high to a low, and it ended up motivating them to show that last year was a fluke and to get back to where we were the prior year."

Even with the loss, Acalanes qualified for the next round of playoffs, the NorCal Regionals. The key to be successful next time for Zuber was simple: "We need to get the first goal. We worked really hard throughout the entire game, and we need to score off the chances that we created."

Barbarino did not want the players to forget how they felt after this game. "We were sitting there, and we decided that we did not want to feel like this again," Barbarino said. "We played well enough to win the game. Unfortunately, soccer is tough."

Lamorinda wrestlers compete at NCS; Ripper and Lee make it to state

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Lee was 1-2 at the state meet, highlighted by her pinning her opponent on the second day. "Coming here and winning a match by pinning her opponent was a real accomplishment," Campolindo head coach Phil Freeman said. "To pin someone in the first division, at the state tournament, is a great accomplishment. It was the capstone of her entire high school career, going out on a high note."

Despite its being Freeman's first season at Campolindo, he already knew the way to Bakersfield having coached at other schools, the most recent, Liberty High School.

Not lacking for confidence, when he first met with the team, Freeman announced for all to hear: "What we are going to do is win all of our dual meets. We're going to have the best girls' program in history. We're going to have multiple NCS placers and we're going to state."

As they say, "It ain't bragging if you do it," though there had to be some relief for Freeman when Lee fulfilled his final prediction. "When I said that we would be very successful, I'm not sure that everybody neces-

sarily believed me because I saw some raised eyebrows," Freeman said. "I'm happy that we're going to state, that we had several section placers and that we won our division."

For Lee, her success at NCS was overwhelming. "As soon as I got off the mat, I started crying," Lee said. "I thought back to the team's banquet my freshman year when Louis (Suba, the Campolindo coach then) said that someday I would make it to the state meet. Actually, my goal was just to make it to day two of the NCS so making it to state is just gravy and I'm super happy that I got to this point."

The other Campolindo girls that competed were Isabelle Lurie (108) who went 4-3, placing in sixth, as well as Natalia Kalas, KT Thompson, Cheryl Potter, Camilia Baxter, Piper Lalli, Isabelle Zabronsky and Charlie Rose.

The seven boys from Campolindo that qualified for NCS included Ohio Paris (106), who finished in eighth place, and Chase Yang (138), Daniel Thaler (152), Walker Johnson (170), Gavin Juni (182), and Shane Harris (220).

Competing at NCS should prove to be valuable training for everyone, according to Freeman: "The experience will make them better

wrestlers. To go to a big tournament, even if you're only there to watch it, will allow them to have the 'been there, done that' feeling the next time they go to a tournament. It takes away some of the intimidation and it becomes something that they can feel that they should do every year."

For Suba, it was a matter of quality over quantity at the NCS with Ripper being the only qualifier among the boys and girls, and he was effusive in his praise for Ripper. "Hannah is an amazing athlete," Suba said. "She is a natural talent who is strong, fast and loves to wrestle. You can teach her a move and by the end of practice, she will have it down. She understands leverage and how to use her body to control her opponent. Hannah is very coachable, pays attention to all the details, and makes all the adjustments she needs to and that's what makes her great."

Ripper gave credit to her first coach at Miramonte, Jason Rosiak and Suba. "I feel very proud to have won the NCS and to make it to state," Ripper said. "Jason was a great guide for me and managed what I needed to get to the top. Coach Suba pushed me physically and mentally and made me want to grow after each defeat and work

and want to get better. They were both people that I needed to ultimately win the NCS and make it to the state tournament."

"We started out with only 10 wrestlers led by Hannah and Jack Hughes," Suba said. "Jack Riley got hurt late in the season, but has shown the talent to succeed along with Carter Camp (162) who brought a jujitsu background to the mat and finished second at the JV league tournament."

Suba was particularly excited about the future for Willie Gilmore (126). "Willie was incredible for a freshman," Suba said. "He finished the season with a record of 20-10 and came in sixth at the league tournament. He is wrestling obsessed and should make NCS next year."

Along with Ripper returning for her senior season, freshmen Alice Crapsy (162) and Gianna George both showed good potential for next year.

Acalanes head coach Greg Weitzman's team went 5-1 in dual meets and was well represented at the NCS tournament. "I'm really proud of our team with our seven boys and three girls that wrestled in the post-season. At the NCS, we had some really awesome wrestling. Freshman Sam Whipple (220) and

Lucas Haase (145) both made it to the second day, each going 3-2. They put in a lot of hard work with all of the twists and turns due to the COVID virus. To see them at the end, having fun and wrestling their best was just awesome to me as a coach."

The other qualifiers from Acalanes were Hunter Goyert (132), Lucas Ross (138), Matt Soto (152), Zach Robb (285) and Miles Garcia.

Olivia Banks finished in eighth place at the NCS, Anya HaasHollenbeck (108) was 302 and Dakota Goyert (101) had a 1-2 record.

Weitzman also appreciated how valuable the experience was for everyone: "It was immensely powerful for our seniors, as a capstone and final moment of their high school wrestling careers. It wasn't just one or two people but to have 10 of our wrestlers, more than half of our team, was phenomenal to see. It was great to see the camaraderie and how excited it was for our underclassmen and seniors. We are going to be doing a lot of interest building to replace our seniors. If we can have a good off-season and get the kids doing some free style and practicing, we will be coming in next year with kids that will have gotten some real mat time."

St. Perpetua 8th-grade American team wins championship



Photo provided

Back row from left: coach Brad Hilsabeck, Graham Schlicht, Joshua Elerts, Tucker Jones, Isaac Copen, Cody De La Cruz, and coach Chris Dodge
Front row from left: Preston Hilsabeck, Leo McDonough, Peyton Beld, Gavin Beers and Gavin Dodge

Submitted by Andrea Hilsabeck

The St. Perpetua 8th grade American basketball team finished the league season 11-0 and won the championship game against CCOP last month.

St. Perpetua's 6th-grade boys win 2021-22 Interleague National Division Championship



Photo provided

From left: Frankie Rocca, Coach Brian Rocca, James Ceridono, Blake Anderson, Kiran Ouk, Coach Ketya Ouk, Alec Schwartz, Grant Cortez, Finn Hogan, Jonah Holloway-Butts and Kirin Kester

Submitted by Jeni Kester

St. Perpetua's 6th grade boys basketball team SP4 won the 2021-22 Interleague National Division Championship.