

Published March 16th, 2022

Campolindo closes out historic four-year run with semifinal loss in state tournament

By Jon Kingdon



Aidan Mahaney Photo Will Bergren

In what the Campolindo boys' basketball team was hoping and anticipating would be their penultimate game of the season, the open division state semifinal game became their final game when they lost to Modesto Christian by a score of 56-53. The game came down to a final long distance shot by Aidan Mahaney that came agonizingly close to putting the game into overtime.

Entering the game, Campolindo was averaging 63.5 points per game, connecting on 48.7% on all their shots and 40.1% of their 3-point shots but had an off night from the floor sinking only 32.2% of all their shots and 21.9% of their 3-point attempts. Mahaney led the Cougars with 27 points followed by Shane O'Reilly-9, Clay Naffziger-8, Matt Radell-7 and Logan Robeson-2.

Trailing 34-25 at the half, the Cougars, as they have done all season, stepped up their game after making halftime adjustments. "We switched one matchup with Shane (O'Reilly) and Matt (Radell) on their two big guys," Coach Steven Dyer said. "It was more about how we had to win with effort plays and be the smarter team which we weren't in the first half. We started getting more stops in the second half and playing possession by possession, not trying to make a 10-point play. I think we did a decent job of that."

Campolindo took their first lead of the game, 43-42 with 0:55 left in the third quarter and their final lead 47-46 with 2:34 left in the game. At that point Modesto scored 10 of the next 11 points.

With Modesto leading 48-47 with 1:50 left in the game, Modesto's Jamari Phillips scored the next eight points for the Crusaders but drew a technical foul for taunting after his last basket with 15.5 seconds left. Mahaney converted the two foul shots. Campolindo then inbounded the ball to Mahaney and he quickly hit a 3-point shot to close the margin to three. Phillips was then fouled with 9.8 seconds left in the game and he missed the one foul shot, but Modesto got the rebound. Phillips was fouled again, and again he missed the foul shot. This time Campolindo got the rebound and called time out with 3.2 seconds left.

There was no question who was going to take the last shot for the Cougars. Mahaney took the inbounds pass in the backcourt and just after he crossed the mid-court line he took a 40-foot shot with time expiring. The dramatic shot hit the backboard, rim, backboard and rim before falling off to the side. Did the shot feel good when it left his hands? "Absolutely it did," Mahaney said. "I believe I'm going to make every shot but this one was tough. I've never ended my season on a loss. Just looking at the scoreboard, it didn't feel real. It's tough, but I feel I can leave with no regrets, and I can leave with my head held high for this game, this season and for this program. It's going to be tough to get over this one."

The close loss was difficult for Dyer and the team to accept. "When you're with all these guys for so long, it's obviously emotional," Dyer said. "We thought we had a good chance to win, and we didn't get it done. Sometimes basketball's like that and tonight it wasn't our night. It's a remarkable accomplishment what this team has done. I'll be able to soak it in probably a little bit more in the coming weeks."

Mahaney felt that the way the team battled to the end exhibited the character of the team. "That's what we play to and that's what we're about," Mahaney said. "Never give up and play within the team. A lot of teams could have folded then. It speaks to the culture we've created and all that we went through led by Coach Dyer, all the coaches and our seniors, to get it done. This one's tough but I'm proud of my guys."

Despite the loss, it was still an opportunity to appraise the team's performance over the last four years. A Division II state championship in 2019, a Division I co-state championship in 2020 (game canceled due to the pandemic), 15-0 in 2021 in a season with no playoffs and concluding this season with a 28-2 record.

At the end of the 2018 season, Campolindo was ranked 583rd in the nation and 67th in California. Prior to the Modesto game, the team was ranked 45th nationally and fifth in the state by MaxPreps, numbers that

Dyer takes great pride in. "These past four years brought Campolindo to unprecedented heights," Dyer said. "Now people know Campolindo. When I first got here, people knew us in our league, then they knew us in the Bay Area, then they knew us in the state and now they know us in the country. That should say a lot about what this senior class has done for us."

Mahaney flashed back on how long he had been teammates with his fellow seniors, center Matt Radell and guard Cade Bennett: "Matt has been setting pick and rolls for me since the third grade. I've been playing with Cade since kindergarten, playing at Lafayette Elementary School. It's been wild and we've been doing it for a long time. Matt and I won AAU national championship in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Then, as freshmen, we come to Campolindo and accomplished what we did these past four years, coming one game short from accomplishing some truly historic stuff."

Mahaney, who will be playing for Saint Mary's next year, intends to maintain his relationship with the Cougars. "I'll be back to Campolindo whenever I can for practices and games," Mahaney said. "We have a lot of really good players. Coach Dyer is a tremendous coach, and one player doesn't define who we are. It's a culture and a team. We've done big things and I expect those things to continue to happen."

Dyer shares that optimism: "These guys have the highest possible standards so our program will work to get back to this point and replicate this as best we can. The guys that are coming back have a great model of how to do it."

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA