

Published April 27th, 2022

Softball teams learning as they go

By Jon Kingdon



Miramonte Head Coach Deb Mauer and her twin daughters Maggie (left) and Kendall (right) Photo Jon Kingdon

There are young teams and there are young teams. In the case of Acalanes, it's a situation where youth is not served. With only two seniors, six juniors, six sophomores and freshmen, many of the players have not brought the commensurate playing time to make it an easy transition to the varsity. With an overall record of 5-8 and 2-1 in league play, the Dons still have their eyes set on the post season.

Bringing the most experience to the team is senior third baseman Scarlett Pappalardo with a .343 batting average and an on base percentage of .521 and junior shortstop and pitcher Hailey Stripling with .524 average. "Scarlett is having a great year as a hitter and as a fielder and Hailey, who has committed to Rutgers University, has been a dominant shortstop for us though we are now using her as our starting pitcher where she has made a big difference. Lana Cerejo, our other pitcher, is only a sophomore who worked hard in the off-season and should keep improving."

Junior Emmi Cronin, the team's leadoff hitter has moved from second to shortstop and freshman Avery Robb is now the team's second baseman and is learning on the job as is freshman catcher Esa Orman. "Both of our freshman are doing well and getting good experience," Silva said. "However, it's really the juniors that are holding the team together."

"I've had young teams before but most of them had more experience," Silva said. "It's a mental game and they have to learn not to take it out on to the field. You can't have a long memory in this game. We had a game where we made 10 errors but with experience, we're

going to get better. Everyone gets along great which is important; we're having fun and the kids have been working hard."

Campolindo

Campolindo is another young team with only two seniors along with five juniors, one sophomore and five freshmen. In his fourth year as the Cougars' head coach, Saul Tallarico acknowledged that "this is the fewest number of seniors we've had."

With a 3-7 overall record and 2-1 in league play, it's the approach that his players take to the game that Tallarico most appreciates. "The girls are really happy to be out there and they're having fun," Tallarico said. "Losing is never fun but the girls really have a good camaraderie. After the pandemic, they're very appreciative and enthusiastic to just be out there, which is a really positive thing."

The team has five girls with at least 10 at bats that are batting over .300: Lyla Marcus (.389), Molly Strohmeyer (.333), senior, Sarah Tallarico (.318), Kylie Dowdall (.316) and freshman Clara Hwang (.300).

"The girls have been consistently hitting well, especially with our top hitters," Tallarico said. "We've been aggressive at the plate. Kaeli Martinet was hurt at the beginning of the year, so we weren't at full strength which led to some of our losses. As we round into the league schedule, we should start to round into more of a whole team as well."

With the new players and the veterans, there is a difference in how they have been handling their at bats. "Some of the younger girls are swingers but the older girls are more disciplined and willing to wait for their pitch," Tallarico said.

The pitching staff is led by Kaeli Martinet and Lyla Marcus. "Kaeli has been pitching the lions share right now and has had some great games but has not had the run support that was hoped for," Tallarico said. "Lyla Marcus is our second pitcher on the staff and also plays second base."

The infield has been very solid with junior Ashlyn Chin playing third base, after moving over from catcher

and Tallarico at shortstop and Kylie Dowdall at first base. Junior Keilly Kilpatrick and freshman Lucy Wilson have been splitting time behind the plate. Molly Strohmeyer has been very solid in the outfield.

"With Ashlyn and Sarah both playing well along with Lyla and Kylie, our infield has been solid," Tallarico said. "Keilly and Lucy are both first time catchers and have been doing great, particularly since neither had ever played there before. Molly has made some great catches in the outfield along with junior Nikita Vayner who has been playing left and right field. Plus, we've been able to sprinkle in the freshmen in other positions at times."

As the Cougars are trying to position themselves to be able to play in the postseason, Tallarico knows what the team has to do to be successful the rest of the season: "We have to be consistent and cutting down on the physical and mental errors. The girls are now getting into a place where they know where to go with the ball every time its hit to them, especially the younger girls. It's having confidence in themselves and building off the personal and team successes which will lead us to better results."

Miramonte

With a 1-7-1 record, 1-2 in league play, Miramonte head coach Deb Mauer has kept things in perspective: "I think the most important thing about this team is that they're having fun and that they have created a really strong bond with each other," Mauer said. "So, when we are in a game where we trailed by a lot, after the game, we don't look at it as if we lost but rather that we played our best and we all appreciate each other."

The team is made up of five seniors (two who are injured), four juniors, two sophomores and four freshmen. "Despite the fact that we have a number of girls that had not played softball before this season, it's been a learning experience for most of them and we've seen a quite an improvement in the play of the team," Mauer said.

Ruby McCabe, Kendall Mauer, and Izzy Pursano have been big hitters on the team. "I'm looking to instill a sense of confidence in our players," Mauer said. "When they're up at bat, I want them to see the bat hit the ball and when that happens, it's a good day."

McCabe was the number one pitcher but has been injured and the team has been trying to find more replacements. Kendal Mauer has moved from behind the plate to become the team's pitcher. "We've done a couple of pitching clinics so we're trying to grow our pitching strength with underclassmen and we're trying to build that as we grow," Mauer said. "Antonia Lawrence, Katherine Scheingart, Pateel Horoopian and Sarah Michels are all potential prospects. Moving to catcher is Izzie Roy."

Maggie Mauer is the team's centerfielder. In the infield, Sarah Michaels is the team's shortstop, Como Adule is the third baseman with Izzie Pursano at first base. "Sarah is one of the top athletes on the team and Komal Aujla is learning as she plays, and Izzie is solid at first base, so we have a pretty solid infield."

Mauer understands that the team's improvement comes in small steps: "The basic skill set of our players has improved exponentially along with their knowledge of the game and their comfort in it. They're much more aware of what is going on in total as opposed to just in their sphere of things. I love softball and being around the girls, teaching them how to be strong women and to have fun with this game and to use it as a jumping off point for the rest of their lives."

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