

# Miramonte leads way in return to DAL Championships

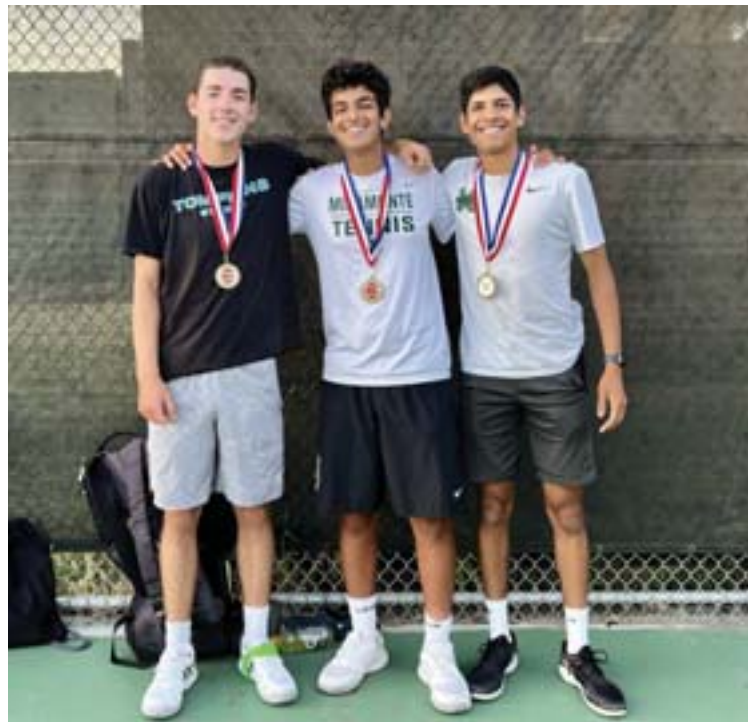


Photo Andrew Lee

**Miramonte's DAL champions: Singles champ Nishad Elias (middle) and Doubles champions Liam Sullivan (left) and Gunther Uriarte (right)**

**By Jon Kingdon**

This has been a stellar year for the boy's tennis teams of Lamorinda. They have a combined record of 38-16 (Miramonte 17-4), Acalanes (9-4) and Campolindo (12-8). The Lamorinda teams were heavily represented in the Diablo Athletic League tournament with 20 of the 32 players coming from Miramonte (7), Campolindo (6) and Acalanes (7). The No. 1 and No. 2 seeds were Miramonte's Nishad Elias and Acalanes' Tyler Toni. Elias went on to win the single's championship defeating College Prep's Dibyan Dikhit 6-4, 6-2 and Toni made it to the tournaments semifinals. Elias then competed in the North Coast Section as the second seed, going on to win his first two matches, losing the next two and finishing in fourth place.

The doubles teams from Lamorinda were equally dominant with seven of the top 10 seeds. Miramonte had the No. 1

seed with Liam Sullivan and Leo Cardozo, No. 3 seed, Gavin Dille and Nishad Elias and the No. 7 seed, Ben Torres and Ethan Haines. Campolindo had the No. 2 seed, Kiumars Koopah and Jake Hammerman, No. 5 seed, James Martin and Rex Pastore and the No. 9 seed – Diego Ledezma and Viggo Wistrom. Acalanes had the No. 4 seed, Tyler Holder and Liam McGlynn and the No. 6 seed – Matthew Muren and Aaron Brown. Overall, Miramonte entered three doubles teams, Campolindo, four teams and Acalanes five teams.

Miramonte also won the doubles championship with Sullivan and Cardozo, defeating Campolindo's Koopah and Hammerman in three sets 6-7, 6-4, 10-6.

Miramonte head coach Andrew Lee, a Carnegie-Mellon graduate, was asked to take over the team a month prior to the start of the season.

This is a veteran team with their first four singles players all

seniors – Elias, Clemens van Dongen (missed the DAL with an injury), Sullivan and Cardozo which facilitated things for Lee. "Our seniors are the top class, and they lost the last two seasons," Lee said. "They showed a lot of promise their freshman year and then lost their next two years to the virus, so they really wanted to take advantage of this last chance and do well, which they certainly did."

Lee was particularly enthused with the performance of senior and co-captain Leo Cardozo who really elevated his game this year: "Leo did not have a lot of tournament experience. He had a great desire and found a way to get better and better, showing a massive improvement and being named second team all-league singles. He was undefeated in the regular season and is the type of player that all teams need."

Lee was also pleasantly surprised at the play of his doubles team of two freshmen, Gavin Dille and Jonah Elias. "They had a remarkable chemistry on the court," Lee said. "They had never played doubles together prior to this season and they really understood what each was doing on the court."

It was a team attitude that contributed to their success. "There were no specific things that tied us together, but they all wanted to support each other and to see each other do well," Lee said. "We brought a competitive spirit, supporting each other. Our goal was to be better at the end of the season than we were at the beginning. Nisham brought a lot of experience and was a good leader in setting an example for the younger players to follow."

## Acalanes

In his first year at Acalanes, head coach Rick O'Brien brought 20 years of coaching experience, mostly at Alhambra High School.

O'Brien appreciated that he stepped into a positive situation with his players. "The thing I

like about the team was that there are no freshmen or seniors," O'Brien said. "They're one big family with unconditional support across the team. There's no jealousy and arguing. They want to be together, play together and support each other. This year is even more special for the juniors and seniors because there was no DAL and NCS the last two years due to COVID. Everyone on the team wanted to play in the post-season. Our three co-captains Tyler Toni, Luke Brightbill and Liam McGlynn were the leaders that the players looked up to."

The singles players were led by junior Toni and freshman Nick Owens who were listed 1 and 2 on the team. Toni missed most of the season due to an injury but did make it back for the DAL tournament and won three matches before losing in the semifinals.

"Owens had to step up and play No. 1 for us in seven matches," O'Brien said. "Though his won-loss record did not reflect it, he grew up a lot playing in the top spot against a lot of very talented players."

The lead doubles team was junior Aaron Brown who won all 10 of his matches this year and Matthew Muren who won nine doubles matches to end the season. Brown and Muren were paired in seven matches. As the sixth seed in the DAL, they got a first-round bye, won a match, and then lost in the quarterfinals.

The team often refers to O'Brien as Rich 4-S's because of the four things he stresses to his players. "I tell them they're all critical, but I put them in order in how I rank them," O'Brien said: 1) Safety – This always comes first. I don't want them on the court if they're injured or sick. I always tell them to make sure there are no balls around their feet on the court; 2) Scholastics – They're all straight A students so I don't worry about that; 3) Sportsmanship –

Be a gentleman on the court; and 4) Success – Win the match.

## Campolindo

In his sixth year at Campolindo coach Jimmy Scott has the youngest team in Lamorinda with four seniors, four juniors, four sophomores and three freshmen.

"We're a pretty young team with a lot of our newcomers having to fill the singles spots, taking on a big role," Scott said. "The overall feel of the team is that they all enjoy being around each other and that really showed on the court as well."

There were 14 players for Campolindo playing singles and doubles in the DAL tournament. "To get back to a full season is so much better than it has been with the abbreviated seasons," Scott said. "The players definitely enjoyed having a full season that included the playoffs."

Leading the singles players for the Cougars were freshmen Kiumars Koopah and Jake Hammerman. "Kiumars did a phenomenal job, exceeding my expectations and Jake also did a very good job and should continue to improve next year," Scott said.

With various injuries and illnesses, the doubles teams were a group in transition much of the season. "There was a lot of fluctuation among those teams, and we had to shift a lot of players around, but they all did a good job in playing with people that they had little experience with prior to their matches," Scott said.

The team's captains were seniors Tobias Kofman and Elton Yu who, according to Scott, "were good in keeping the team together."

In a league with such tough competition, Scott kept things in perspective for his players; "We worked hard on the courts but also in a fun setting. I also made sure that they knew when it was time to work and take care of business."

# Miramonte boys win DAL Tournament; Campo advances in NCS

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"The difference in the game was our energy level. We all worked hard and had a great team game plan. We just played together and played team ball."

Miramonte showed good ball control getting to the majority of the loose balls. "That's something we've been working on, controlling the game, the ball and the tempo we play at," McGovern said. "It's a sign of how good their sticks are and the way we were able to control the ball."

McGovern praised the defense and singled out Bliss for his play and leadership: "Our top four defenders all did a great job but particularly Ethan who played 100%, putting the team on his back and said, 'I refused to lose this game.'"

The Matadors then came up short against Campolindo in the NCS tournament.

## Campolindo

This has been an up and down season for Campolindo. The Cougars had an 8-7 record coming into the NCS tournament having not won or lost more than two games in a row all season.

In the semifinal game of the DAL tournament against Acalanes, Campolindo lost in overtime by a score of 17-16. The disappointment in the loss was exacerbated by an unsportsmanlike penalty after the Cougars tied the game with four seconds left in regulation when a player flung his stick into the air. The penalty carried over to overtime and Acalanes scored the winning goal 15 seconds later.

"It was a dogfight, and we have to take the emotion out of it," head coach Colin Knightly said. "We have to avoid penalties, be professional and keep our emotions under control." Knightly rationalized the late penalty on the fact that "they're teenagers."

After the loss to Acalanes, Knightly was counting on making the NCS. The seventh seeded Cougars won their opening game at home over Rancho Co-

tate, 20-6, and then had a pseudo-home game, only having to travel down the road to play second seeded Miramonte.

In a season that Knightly described as a grind, they picked the right time to play their most competitive game of the year, defeating Miramonte by a score of 15-8. The game was tied after the first quarter 3-3 but Campolindo had a dominant second quarter scoring nine goals and going into halftime leading 12-6.

"This was the best game we played all year," Knightly said. "Our seniors knew that if we lost, this would be the last game of their career. It was a rivalry game and playing at Miramonte was as close to a home game as it could be, so everything was in our favor, and we just really wanted this game."

The 15 goals scored by Campolindo was the most scored against Miramonte all season who came into the game giving up an average of 6.3 goals per game. The Cougars were led by Harrison Leenhouts, who had five goals and two assists, Patrick Sebree with four goals and Holden Coakley with three goals.

"We were able to find the open seams in their defense," Leenhouts said. "We kept our heads up and kept looking for the open guy. This was a game we were looking forward to all week because we knew what they were going to do, and we had our game plan and it worked out for us."

Penetration on offense was the key for Knightly. "The most valuable real estate on the field is right in front of the goal so we wanted to take advantage of that," Knightly said. "We wanted to be 'crease creatures.' Our guys did a good job right by the goal and it really helped us to see the crease. Harrison is just a special player. He's a pleasure to coach, a pleasure to be around and a pleasure to watch."

Miramonte had been averaging 14.4 goals per game but were held to their second fewest goals in a game all season. "We decided to go with a zone defense because we figured that it

would be tough to be the whole team rather than breaking it down one by one," Knightly said. "Our goalie Dante Aviccoli was outstanding tonight and Tyler Kivelson controlled most of the face offs and that really helped us big time and Jack Alaclay did a great job in shutting down their best shooters."

Campolindo's next game was on May 10, after press time, against the No. 3 seeded Tamalpais High School in Mill Valley and if they win that game, they would play the winner of the Justin-Siena – Bishop O'Dowd game on May 12.

## Acalanes

Despite making it to the finals of the DAL and the second round of the NCS with a 12-8 record, Acalanes head coach Lorne Smith was left hoping for more. "One of our goals is always to get into the NCS," Smith said. "We're trying to win championships for sure, so you never like to end your season with a loss."

Acalanes earned a spot in the DAL championship game against Miramonte with a 17-16 overtime win over Campolindo, coming up short against Miramonte by a score of 15-7. Against Miramonte, the Dons fell behind 4-0, coming back to trail 7-5 at halftime. "The ball wasn't bouncing our way early in the game and it's been that way in a number of our games," Smith said. "We just had to take a breath and get ready to play. Our guys played hard and battled."

Miramonte closed out the game by outscoring Acalanes 8-2 in the second half. "We feel that with our team that if we do the things we know that we can do, we'll have success," Smith said. "In the first half, we didn't do those things. It was a game of runs and they had more runs than we did."

After a first round 13-2 win over University High (S.F.), Acalanes lost to the third seeded Tamalpais despite the play of Dylan Olson, who was a stand-out on offense with some top goals.

With a strong junior class

and a number of players moving up from the JV team, Smith is already looking forward toward next season. "We're excited to see things keep rolling next year," Smith said.

There are a number of players returning on offense and defense. "Dylan and Cooper Olson at attack are leaders down there and Ben Foox emerged at the midfield as a strong face off player and had a great season," Smith said. "Our first three midfielders are all coming back. John Cain in his first year on the varsity had a great season as a long stick middy and Zach Appel and David Depaepe are the other returning midfield starters."

Depaepe did as much off the field as he did in the games. "David is not a big scorer but emotionally he is one of the guys that got the team fired up in practice and before the games," Smith said. "He is a bit of an

emotional engine in a good way."

The defense is set with Blake Chehlaoui in the goal and George Churchill heading the defense. "We feel we will have a great goalie in Blake who is really strong and saw playing time as a backup this season," Smith said.

This will be an experienced team that is very familiar with each other next year. "We have a core group of offensive and defensive players returning, many of whom have played together for a long time," Smith said. "It's always nice to have strong senior leadership led by our co-captains George Churchill and Owen Estee and our other seniors to define the character of what the team is going to be. Every team is different from year to year which is what makes it a lot of fun. There is only an upside in our future."

# Lamorinda high school students compete at DAL track and field championships



Photo provided

**Pictured, from left: Corina Jones - Alhambra (5th place), Elle Rodriguez - Miramonte (3rd place), Jessica Youn - Miramonte (1st place), Jeanette Lavoie - Campolindo (2nd place), Aiyana Lawler - College Park (4th place), Gema Villafan-Perez - Acalanes (6th place)**

## Submitted by Doug Bockmiller

Lamorinda high school students sweep varsity women's pole vault finals at Diablo Athletic League (DAL) track and

field championships on April 30. Miramonte sophomores Jessica Youn and Elle Rodriguez placed first and third; Campolindo senior Jeannette Lavoie took second. The meet was held at Campolindo High School.