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Miramonte and Campolindo make it to NorCal Tournament

By Jon Kingdon



Charlie Eng

Concluding their season with a 16-12 record, the Miramonte boys water polo team had a lot to hang their hats on. Following a 16-11 record last season which concluded with the Matadors falling to Sacred Heart Prep in the NorCal finals, history repeated itself, to a degree, with Miramonte losing to Sacred Heart Prep again though this time in the semifinals by a score of 12-8.

Miramonte earned a 4th seed in the NorCal tournament after making to the finals of the North Coast Sectional tournament but coming up short against De La Salle 12-8. Coach Lincoln Haley was disappointed in the loss but acknowledged the play of De La Salle. "It was good to make it to the NCS final but for us, we always have the same goal which is to win the NCS," Haley said. "De La Salle is an incredible team with a great staff so we knew going in it was going to be a battle and it was tough the entire game."

Just three days later, Miramonte took on St. Francis in their opening NorCal match and won the match 12-9. "There was no hangover from the De La Salle loss and we were even down a couple of players," said Coach John Nash. "We called upon a lot of our freshmen, Tristan Tucker, Jackson Cherry and Brock Bliss, and even asked seniors Luke Lewis and Matteo Petty to play bigger minutes."

It was an offense that was in sync and performing well. "When we're playing at our best, we're sharing the ball," Nash said. "We don't have one guy that will score most of our goals so we are really team oriented with the guys setting up each other."

The defense was led by senior goalie Addison Owensby who was dominant against De La Salle and St. Francis. "Addison really stepped up and played one of his best games of the year against St. Francis with 11 saves," Nash said. "He really saw the ball and communicated well and really anchored the defense."

It was a team effort all season on defense for Miramonte. "We had three shutdown defenders with Petty, Oliver Sherwood and Grant Kurtz," Nash said. "Others who were great at communicating were Charlie Eng and Brian Edelen. We really evolved into an outstanding defensive team."

The success of the team was set early by traveling down to Southern California and playing against some of their top teams. "We returned a much better team and it gave us a lot of confidence playing twice against a team like Newport Harbor who is the No. 1 ranked team in the nation, losing the second time 12-6," Nash said. "The experience made us a better team for sure."

Campolindo

Despite a 9-14 record in the regular season, Campolindo received the 5th seed in the NCS tournament, defeating Northridge in the first round 9-5 before losing to De La Salle in the semifinals 16-8.

Once again, the NorCal committee took into account the number of games that the Cougars played in Southern California and also their 7-2 division record with both of the losses coming against Miramonte so they were given the No. 2 seed in Division II.

"We front loaded a lot of our tournaments and were not as prepared for some of those games as well as we could have been and in many of those games we had leads in the fourth quarter but weren't together enough to close out games that were winnable," Coach Darren Schroeder said. "We would like to have competed in the Division I level since we had beaten some Division I teams during the season," Schroeder said. "The upside is that in playing in Division 2 with a high seed, we had the opportunity to play three games."

It ended at two games with Campolindo defeating Del Oro in the first round 12-6 and coming up painfully short against the third seeded San Ramon Valley 9-8 in the second round.

Campolindo, like so many of the teams actually would take more satisfaction in winning the NCS over the NorCal tournament. "The NCS tournament is like the Orinda Moraga Pool Association (OMPA) where everyone gets fired up to compete there," Schroeder said. "NorCal is like the County swimming tournament

which follows the OMPA and for many it just extends your season unless you truly have an opportunity to play three games and come out on top."

With five senior starters graduating this year, there are going to be a number of opportunities for people to step into next season. "We're going to miss those players because they have been an integral part of the team this season," Schroeder said. "Like Grant Roesch, who has committed to Santa Clara, Thomas Colpo and Reid Thorson who has been a monster in the center."

Sophomores Hayden O'Hare, Garrett Chivers and Dylan King were also big contributors.

Led by junior goalie Joey Cecchin, the defense was a key in the team's success. "We focused most of our season on defense and it really served us well," Schroeder said. "We got better and better as our defense evolved and our players learned our schemes and systems which included our counter attack defense. Where we had been giving up counter-attack goals early in the year, we did not give up a single counter-attack goal in the second half of the season. Our offense came from our defense and they evolved as well."

Schroeder is counting on the younger players on the team to step up next year. "We pulled up three of our JV players for the post season - Lincoln Sovikk, Jack Elder and Sam Storrs," Schroeder said. "We're very excited about how they will contribute to the team next season."



Patrick Stice Photos Ann Murphy, taken while playing St Francis



Jackson Cherry Photos Ann Murphy, taken while playing St Francis

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