

Julian Fiammengo named Campolindo baseball coach



Photo Jon Kingdon

Campolindo baseball coach Julian Fiammengo

By Jon Kingdon

With the local sports world focused on the playoff tournaments for the fall sports, it was Campolindo Athletic Director Ray Meadows who reminded everyone that preparation for the spring season is also ongoing when he named Julian Fiammengo as the new baseball coach for the Cougars. Fiammengo, who played football and baseball for College Park High School, graduating in 2009, and baseball for Diablo Valley College, ultimately graduating from San Francisco State, is also a teacher in the Mt. Diablo Unified School Dis-

trict.

"This is my first time as a varsity head coach after being affiliated with College Park High School for about eight years," Fiammengo said. "I ran the JV program and have been helping out Coach Andy Tarpley with the varsity program the last couple of years, and I have also managed teams since 2015 whether it was the JV program or a private travel club in the summer and the fall."

Fiammengo played for Tarpley at DVC and played and coached for De La Salle's David Jean in summer ball and both were very much responsible for his development. "Coach Tarp has been a mentor, and role model in teaching me the game of baseball, as a player, a coach and as a manager," Fiammengo said. "The biggest thing I learned from him is that as a coach, you're doing it for the kids and for the love of the game in a selfless manner. From this, I've found a lot of purpose in coaching. I've been really lucky, and I feel grateful to have the opportunity to be here at Campolindo and being a baseball coach has allowed me to fulfill myself and to find purpose that way."

It was Tarpley who recommended Fiammengo to Meadows who was familiar with Tarpley's reputation as a top baseball coach. "My son played with Andy Tarpley and when the coaching position opened up, I contacted Andy because he's so connected in the baseball community, and he strongly recommended Julian."

Fiammengo works in a virtual independent study, learning program teaching history and English to seventh and eighth graders. When

COVID hit, I began working virtually through the independent study program," Fiammengo said. "It's under the same umbrella of the all-ed program."

Working both as a teacher and as a coach allows Fiammengo to use similar skills with each group. "It's refreshing for me because I get to work with two really different kinds of kids," Fiammengo said. "There's a wide spectrum of kids that come through our independent study program and then there's also a wide spectrum of kids that come through our baseball programs. Baseball is a very diverse game, getting kids from all walks of life and the same thing happens in the schools. It is a different type of adjustment when I come from work to the field because after working in an online setting all day, I then come out and I live in the dirt with the kids, so for me, it's a really good balance."

It was the combination of Fiammengo's people skills combined with his coaching experience that initially won over Meadows. "Julian is the entire package," Meadows said. "Besides knowing baseball really well, Julian has a vision and is a really effective communicator. That really came across in the interview process in terms of the relationships that he wants to build. We talked with some of his students and players that he's coached, and they love him. We're really excited with this hire because he's going to be great."

For Fiammengo, it's more than just coaching a player on the field, it's also helping individuals off the field: "As with any sport, having played foot-

ball, basketball and baseball while growing up, I saw how sport teaches character and life lessons and how everything that you learn on the field in order to succeed, can be directly applied to real life and ultimately into adulthood once they move on from sports. That's why I'm so passionate about teaching morals and the ethics on the field because it's something that the players can take and apply it later in life in terms of work ethic, character, discipline, pride, and selflessness. Those are all things that I like to preach on the baseball field so that these boys can be good men when they leave here."

As for his baseball strategy, Fiammengo sees more than one way of doing things offensively. "I love to put pressure on offense, doing things like running and bunting," Fiammengo said. "However, you have to assess your opponent and your own personnel along with the game's situations. I can't say that I have one set philosophy - doubles and home runs are good too. Small ball opens up big ball and creates those opportunities."

Understanding that each pitcher has his own set of skills, Fiammengo has one demand that he will make on all of his pitchers. "My first priority is to have them pound the strike zone," Fiammengo said. "You can have pitchers who are prepared to throw a lot of innings and some who are limited in that way but can still be effective. Some throw harder, and some locate better than others. Once a pitcher has that foundation of throwing strikes, you can work off that with his secondary pitches and then build velocity."

Fiammengo is no stranger to Lamorinda baseball and appreciates the performance of the Campolindo baseball team that was coached by Max Luckhurst. "Max has been a legendary coach at Campolindo, having been here so long and having coached against him," Fiammengo said. "There are tons of great things I learned about him from other coaches and players with some intense war stories between Campolindo and College Park through the last decade, and his having won back-to-back-to-back NCS championships, and I look forward to continuing what he started. I've coached against Acalanes' Conner Hornsby and Miramonte's Sean Hennessey. I knew of Conner growing up and of Coach Hennessey when he was the head coach at Las Lomas in my playing days."

He also has a connection with Campolindo's football coach, Kevin Macy. "Growing up, I attended Coach Macy's football camps, and I was on the sidelines at some Campolindo football games when I was in elementary and middle school," Fiammengo said. "Coach Macy's son, Miles, was a teammate of mine when we played basketball and baseball growing up."

Fiammengo is hitting the ground running: "I'm really excited and honored to have the opportunity to be at Campolindo," Fiammengo said. "It's a school with a really strong tradition of academics and athletics and I look forward to continuing that tradition. There's a lot of prestige here and high expectations to fulfill and I'm embracing that."

OIS girls basketball wins championship



Submitted by Maureen Matthews

Orinda Intermediate School won the East Bay middle school girls basketball championship. Winning a tough battle over a talented Martinez team 34-28, OIS relied on relentless defense and a pass-first offensive scheme. Lorelei Keenan was named to the all tournament team, and Annelise Lindberg was named tournament MVP.

Standing from left: Ally Rogin, Lorelei Keenan, Talia Kardon, Annelise Lindberg, Myra Gakhar, Kimia Jowharchi, Sophia Blore, Samantha Murphy, Freida Vierra, and coach Curry; kneeling from left: Sydney Gray, Claire Kennedy, and Ava Noga.

Photo Maureen Matthews

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