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Winning seasons underscore growth of Lamorinda girls soccer teams

By Jon Kingdon



Acalanes players Emma Cronin (16) and Addie Bailey (18) Photo Brian Mikalis

Acalanes and Campolindo girls soccer teams have continued the success they achieved last season and Miramonte has joined them with an equally successful season.

Miramonte

With the arrival of head coach Taylor Abbott, there has been a major turnaround at Miramonte from last year's 3-15-1 team to this year 8-3-2 team. It was a combination of Abbott wanting to bring Miramonte a successful program and the seniors who made it clear to him of their desire for the same thing.

"It was sad to see the downturn at Miramonte," Abbott said. "I wanted to bring some new energy, along with a youthful coaching staff and see what we could do. Most of the time we have four coaches out here at practice, and that helps a lot."

The seniors on the team contacted Abbott expressing their commitment to this season. "They reached out to me by email letting me know what they wanted to achieve and that set the tone," Abbott said. "They wanted a more intense practice schedule; they wanted their coaches to be prepared and ready and did not want to repeat the failures of the last couple seasons. They knew they weren't getting the most out their talent and just wanted to put all the pieces together."

With an equal number of upper and lower classmen, Miramonte is built for long-term success. "The seniors were excited to finish their careers successfully," Abbott said. "We have a lot of young talent on the roster, with two freshmen already starting and making big contributions."

Abbott's philosophy can be summed up in one word: possession. "We like to build up the play and see if we can attack from the sides, but maintaining possession and really trying to wear down our opponents is probably what I would believe in most," Abbott said.

The five senior captains are Avery Welch, Jada Dietrick, Tahra Minowada, Addison Creson, and Lola Kassela. The overall senior leadership and the talent of the underclassmen has proved to be an effective combination. "We have a lot of young people who are hungry to contribute," Abbott said. "Five of our freshmen played on the same club team, so they've all been able to work cohesively and it's been really fun to watch."

The starting freshmen are Camilla White, Inara Inesi, and Sawyer Bohlig. "I'm going to play the best players that are suited for the team in any given game," Abbott said. "They came in, earned their spot, and we haven't looked back. I firmly believe in development, which is why we're really excited to get three teams in the program this year."

The leaders on offense are sophomore Olivia Penney, who is the team's leading scorer, Inesi and senior co-captain Jada Dietrich. "Jada has been playing center mid, scoring goals and making lots of assists and in my biased opinion could be our league MVP," Abbott said.

Senior Caroline De Bourbon has been starting in the net with senior Megan Doran coming in off the bench. "Each has been excellent so far this season," Abbott said. "With no prior experience, Caroline showed up to an open tryout for goalies and has really taken it head on. She is fearless and is getting more comfortable in the goal. There will be times when we won't see her until the end of the day because she's been off working on her trade, from basics to diving, balls in the air, drop kicks and being aware of where her line and spacing is on the field."

The defense is giving up less than a goal a game with six shutouts led by three senior captains - outside back Addison Creson, outside left Lola Kassela, Tahra Minowada in the center and Camilla White at center back. "Our defense has been tremendous in not allowing a lot of shots and scoring opportunities which makes the goalie's job even easier."

For Abbott, it's a matter of the team not making any missteps the rest of the season. "We play a really fast-paced possession style soccer game," Abbott said. "The only games we've lost have been off of our own

mistakes. If we can play a clean game, dictating the tempo of the game and play the way that we want to, we can compete with any of the teams that are out there."

Acalanes

Last year's Acalanes team had a great mix of upper and lower classmen on the roster on a team that went 20-3, making it to the CIF NorCal Soccer championship tournament. This year's team, ranked 14th by the Bay Area News Group, has a similar mix of upper and lower classmen and has a 7-1-5 record so far.

Head coach Nick Barbarino sees a strong comparison with each team. "This team is very similar to last year's team but we're still getting to know each other," Barbarino said. "We have some new kids that are starting and some seniors that are stepping into new roles and a number of players missed the early part of the season due to the club layover. It's nice to have veteran experience combined with the youth who pushing the upperclassmen and keeping them on their toes."

Leadership is coming from the four senior captains, all of whom lettered as freshmen - Tatum Zuber, Addie Bailey, Jacque Peacock and Chloe Quintella. "They all learned from the senior class when they were freshmen," Barbarino said. "They each have different roles - positivity, hard work, planning things outside of practice and insuring everyone comes to practice. It's been great to see them grow and it's hard to believe that they're already seniors."

After scoring 21 goals in the first three games, the offense has only scored nine goals in the next 10 games. "Jacque Peacock was a defender and is now on the wings with Zuber and Bailey," Barbarino said. "We're getting the shots and opportunities but we haven't finished them but I believe it's going to come around in the second half."

The defense has had 11 shutouts and only given up two goals this season. "Our defense has been fantastic this year," Barbarino said. "Our center backs Chloe Quintella and Demi Woods have been holding it down all year. Freshman Tori Hiatt has been fantastic on the last back spot and has shown the ability to shut down our opponent's best player. With Taylor Carlin, a three-year starter at right back we have a good mix of young and old on the defense."

Senior Catherine Judson is in her third year as the Don's goalie. "It's been great to see how much Catherine has improved each year," Barbarino said. "She has a great ability to make the high save. She's very calm with the ball at her feet which lets us build out and gives our defense a little bit more time."

Barbarino is preaching patience to his team: "We just need them to trust ourselves, each other, our veterans, our teammates. If we focus on that, we're going to do well in the second half."

Campolindo

Campolindo is another team that is coming off a successful season (13-4-4) and, with a strong senior class and a number of freshmen, has a record of 9-3-1 this year. "I think that we're still hungry," head coach Luis Diaz said. "We have 11 seniors providing the motivation for all of the players to prove that they can be competitive plus the culture that we have is picking up where we left off. This senior class has shown their commitment to the program and the underclassmen are getting great experience."

Leading the team are four senior starters, Catie McCauley, Audrey Le-Nguyen, Collette Toubba and Ava Garcia. "They all bring a lot of leadership and culture, setting good habits and high standards," Diaz said. "The senior group has been a fun group to coach because the underclassmen are always challenging and pushing them."

On offense, it's more of a group effort than one of individual stars. "Le-Nguyen moved to outside player from midfield and has been a great leader and also defends," Diaz said. "It's been good for the underclassmen to see how she is adapting. Junior Mylie Jaquet and freshman Grace Charles have stepped up and sophomore Maya Abughosh scored both goals to defeat Clayton Valley."

Leading the defense has been seniors Ava Garcia and Catie McCauley. "They are both having really good years," Diaz said. "Ava has done a great job in locking up players in the back and really helping the underclassmen and Catie, at right back, has been helping us get up the field along with playing well on defense."

Diaz has been utilizing two goalies, starting senior Ana Mooradian, and junior Maya Schwartz. "Ana's attitude and effort have always been great while still working on the mental strength required for the position," Diaz said. "She has great mobility and leadership, pushing us up and getting us back. Maya is a former basketball player who is in her first year with the program and is showing a lot of potential and just needs a little bit more time to adapt to our program."

Diaz is expecting things to come together in the final part of the season. "Where we are making the biggest changes is from our forwards to our midfielders," Diaz said. "We're struggling a little in this area because we have four new players in the top five front players who were backups last year but they're adapting to things quickly. Our goal is to continue to keep on growing and developing at the right time which will be when the NCS playoffs begin."

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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