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All six Lamorinda lacrosse teams make it to the NCS tournament

By Jon Kingdon



Acalanes 44 Owen Estee. Miramonte 17 Jack Alcalay. 5 Declan Henderson. Goalie 21 Dante Avicolli Photo Will Lovitt

Campolindo was ahead 6-4 at the half led by senior Harrison Leenhouts five goals. In the third quarter, goals from Owen Estee, Dylan and Cooper Olson, and Marshall Anderson put Acalanes ahead while two final goals by Simon Appel and one more by Estee closed out the scoring. Acalanes goalies Blake Chelaoui and Dante Avicolli stopped 32 shots insuring the victory.

With winning records by all the Lamorinda teams, each team got a seeding: Acalanes-14-2 with a 1 seed, Campolindo-11-4 with a 5 seed, and Miramonte-8-6 with a 6 seed that allowed each team to play at home in their first NCS game, which each team won, advancing to the second round.

Acalanes

After finishing the 2022 season with a 12-9 record, head coach Lorne Smith saw a "real upside" to the 2023 team and proved to be prescient with the Dons finishing the regular season with a 13-2 record.

"Our senior class have been great leaders that have really shaped the character of our team," Smith said.

Leading the offense are Owen Estee, Dave Depaepe, and Ben Foox. "Owen has been both an emotional and offensive leader," Smith said. "He just loves playing lacrosse and you can't keep him off the field of play. Dave has been an emotional, fiery player that has a real engine that gets the team going. Ben has been incredible winning faceoffs, making good things start to happen and has been the cause for a lot of our momentum."

Blake Chelaoui has been the starting goalie. "Blake has been a real asset in the goal for sure," Smith said. "He's been making a lot of saves and clears the ball really well."

It's been a solid defense in front of Chelaoui that has only allowed 6.8 goals per game and is led by George Churchill, John Cain, Connor Faust, Colin Mahlmquist and Evren Rose, all of whom Smith speaks highly of: "George has brought a level of experience, confidence, physicality and perspective to the game which really helps to lock things down. John, up top, really locks it down from the midfield. He is in the best shape I've ever seen in a lacrosse player, sprinting all over the field, playing almost every run in the game and is having a great year. All of our close defensemen like Connor Faust and Colin Mahlmquist do a good job down low, supporting each other well. Evren at the midfield spot has really developed into a good defensive player and has been a real asset, taking almost every defensive midi run."

Acalanes won their first two games in the NCS defeating Terra Linda 17-2 and Northgate 14-8.

Miramonte

Replacing longtime head coach Byron McGovern, Joe Azevedo has been close with the team over the years, so his philosophy was to carry on with what has made the team successful.

"It's about these guys coming out and playing Miramonte lacrosse and identifying what that was and sticking to our game plan," Azevedo said. "The plan is based on fundamentals with the players moving the

After an early season rout by Acalanes (14-4), Campolindo boys' lacrosse head coach Colin Knightly had his team looking for revenge in the DAL championship game. "We wanted to go out there and play them as tough as possible. We made a number of adjustments this game to make their life difficult and to make sure we were competitive," Knightly said. "It was a tough loss but a game that we could be proud of and one that prepared us for the NCS tournament."

Acalanes head coach Lorne Smith had his team equally focused on the championship game. "It was our goal at the beginning of the year to win the DAL championship and then to compete for an NCS championship and I think we're moving in the right direction," Smith said. "We still have a lot that we can improve on and we're all looking forward to competing in the NCS."

Acalanes defeated Campolindo by a score of 12-10 in a game that was closer than the score indicated.

ball and their feet, working together and communicating, doing the things that are standard in most sports and when we've done that, we've played well, and we've been able to match up with anyone and qualifying for the NCS tournament."

Azevedo knew he was getting into, playing in such a competitive league. "Absolutely. We've been playing competitive games against our crosstown rivals in Campolindo and Acalanes," Azevedo said "We've played a lot of solid games and I think that says a lot for the lacrosse in this area and a nod to the local club teams that feed the high schools."

Miramonte lost a number of players to graduations and a whole new group of players took things over. "We were pleasantly surprised this year when we had a new crop of players come out," Azevedo said. "The team has been hardworking and focused. Our challenge was to figure out our identity. They've come to realize that wins don't just happen and it's nice to be in this position."

There has been a strong core of leadership with five senior captains, Jack Spencer, Chase Bliss, Matthew Hawkins, Jake Disston and Jonah Azevedo. The offense, defense and midfield are all represented within this group. "They cover both ends of the field," Azevedo said. "They're all strong guys of character, good role models and they've managed to get the team on the same page that's been our goal from the start."

Azevedo analogizes his offense to basketball: "There's a role for everyone to play," Azevedo said. "It comes down to possessions, with every player picking up a ground ball and getting us that possession which gives us another chance on offense."

Azevedo likes to use his defense to get the offense started: "We try and keep things pretty simple on defense - we make the stop and then push and transition to offense because we've got the athletic guys to fast break and get the ball on the offensive side to give our attackers the opportunity to score."

The defense is led by Spencer, Hayden Westover, Nick Blair, and Grant Saanlon. "Jack locks us down there, and they've all contributed, and we've been able to take advantage of their athleticism," Azevedo said.

Junior Rhys Hire brought a soccer background and athleticism into the goal. "I'll take an athletic goalie anytime and he helps us get the ball up field," Azevedo said.

Approaching the NCS, Azevedo, returns to basics: "We have to bring it all together. There are no magic bullets here. It's a matter of playing hard and together for four quarters."

Miramonte defeated St. Mary's (Stockton) 20-7 and lost in the quarterfinal game to Piedmont 12-6.

Campolindo

After starting off the season with a 2-3 record, Campolindo hit their stride winning nine of their last 11 games. "We didn't play well in a couple of early games, but we got better every week," Coach Knightly said. "The start of the lacrosse season is so early and can be chaotic because a number of times we don't know what field we will be on, sharing the field with the soccer team whose season carried over with their playoffs and with all of the rain, we missed out on a lot of practices."

Campolindo averaged 12.8 goals on offense that had a number of scorers led by Harrison Leenhouts who will be playing for Colby next year, Patrick Sebree, Evan Louis, DecHenn Anderson, and Holden Coakley all contributing to the team's success.

"We're really going to miss Harrison. He has over 70 goals this season and may be one of the best players to have come out of Campolindo and certainly the best player I've coached over the last 15 years," Knightly explained. "Patrick is a textbook lacrosse player that is a leader on the field and by example. He does everything right which increases his scoring, his ground balls, and his passing percentages. Evan, a senior captain, only began playing as a freshman and has been a glue guy that can play both offense and defense.

"Declan, a midfielder, may be our most improved player only starting to play lacrosse last year," Knightly added. "He's made a major transformation from being a new player to someone that we came to depend on to do well. Holden is an attacker that always seems to come up with the key goals that are so meaningful."

The defense is led by two sophomores, Griffin Tetz and Boden Rasmussen. "Griffin does a lot for us," Knightly said. "He is a great dual sport athlete. Boden has started every game the past two years. He gets a lot of hard matchups and dodges really well and is hard to guard."

Dante Avicolti is a junior that really settled down as the year progressed having given up 66 goals in the first five games and only 83 goals in the next 11 games. "Dante helps me sleep at night knowing that I have a keeper who can really save the ball," Knightly said. "He should be able to play at the next level. He improved his poise in the clear game with his outlet passes and his communication skills makes him a rock-solid foundation of the defensive unit."

Knightly did not get down after the loss in the DAL championship. "It was a great atmosphere playing against Acalanes," Knightly said. "Every year we want to compete for the NCS championship."

Campolindo won their opening game in the NCS against Livermore 10-5 and lost in the next round to Justin-

Siena 9-6.



Campo's #13 Griffin Tetz shoots to Acalanes goalie Blake Chehlaoul Photo Will Lovitt



#8 Acalanes Marshall Anderson, #17 Jack Alcalay, Goalie Dante Avicolli Photo Will Lovitt

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