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## Campo boys water polo wins D-2 NorCal Championship; Mats suffer close loss in D-1 final

By Jon Kingdon



Campolindo boys team Photo Shirley DeFrancisci

Though disappointed at just missing playing in the Division I NorCal Tournament, finishing third in the NCS championship, Campolindo did have the satisfaction at being named the No. 1 seed in the Division II tournament. After defeating Rocklin 14-9 and San Luis Obispo 14-4 in their first two games, Campolindo, ranked 40th nationally, came away victorious over the 30th ranked Buchanan (Clovis) High School in the championship game with a 14-12 victory.

The Cougars played a very difficult regular season schedule competing against several teams ranked high nationally. The Cougars took the challenge and ran (or swam) with it. "We really had a trial by fire and the team responded with our development over the course of the year," co-head coach Darren Schroeder said. "The team's character was focused and interested in developing."

Even with an extended losing streak late in the season, the team never lost his composure. "As coaches, we really did not have to do anything there," Schroeder said. "Our players are positive, and our captains, Callen Bronson and Dante Vattuone, are very good leaders and we kept working and soon enough, it was behind us."

Schroeder and Yuri Hanley stressed teamwork over individuality from the beginning and it has worked on offense and defense. "We're very balanced in terms of goal scoring among five players and our defense also has a very team-oriented defensive scheme," Schroeder. "That makes it a little difficult to pick out 'stars' on the team with the way that they have developed and play together."

Stepping in as the team goalie, Joey Cecchin kept up the tradition of strong play in the goal. "Joey was fantastic. You know, every time you graduate a great goalie and Campolindo has a tradition of great goalies, you're really going to miss some, but it helps when you know that there's another talented player right behind them coming out."

Miramonte

After defeating De La Salle 12-10 in the North Coast Section championship, Miramonte entered the Division I NorCal CIF championship as the third seed. The Matadors opened the tournament defeating Saint Francis 17-12 and Bellarmine College Prep 10-9, setting up the championship game against Sacred Heart Prep. Trailing by one after three periods, Miramonte was outscored 4-2 in the fourth quarter, making the final score 13-10 in favor of Sacred Heart Prep.

Miramonte had a schedule that saw them play 11 teams that were ranked in the top 10 nationally, which was by design, according to co-head coach John Nash: "Every year we set out to play the most difficult schedule we possibly can because if we compete against the best, it'll put us in the best position to be prepared to play the North Coast and CIF playoffs."

It proved to be an effective way to help the team handle the pressure of competition. "We ended up learning what the process of winning is like," co-head coach Lincoln Nash said. "It was going to take four quarters of effort and realize that there are going to be ebbs and flows every game and you have to keep a positive mindset the entire time."

The goal for the coaches was to keep the team balanced. "We talked about staying off the emotional roller coaster," Nash said. "We wanted our players to stay even keeled, not reacting to positive or negative things but to just move on to the next play which has put us in a great position for the post-season."

Cooper Stern who began the season as a field player, became the Matadors' starting goalie in mid-season. "Cooper has done a really nice job for us," Nash said.

Henry Engs, Grant Kurtz, Oliver Sherwood, Tristan Tucker, Griff Tunney, Patrick Stice and Brady Hassett were major players on the team. "They all contributed a bunch as have our substitutes," Nash said. "As a freshman, Hassett did a really nice job progressing through the course of the season, earning more playing minutes. Ben Lucas also became one of our top guys off the bench as a utility player."

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