

Published March 13th, 2024

## Success and growth for Lamorinda Wrestling

By Jon Kingdon



Campolindo Piper Lalli and Coach Phil Freeman  
Photo provided

With a new beginning at Acalanes, continued growth at Miramonte, and a third straight season for a Campolindo wrestler to make it to the state tournament, it was a season to build on for the Lamorinda wrestling teams. Campolindo head coach Phil Freeman has set a high bar for himself and for his team. "We had a pretty solid season that could have been better in some ways, but I think it was a solid year," Freeman said. The Cougars were well represented at the DAL league tournament. Luke Hansen - first, Shane Harris - second, Emory Hsiao-146, Daniel Thaler - fifth, Emilio Penate - sixth, Jack Simmons - sixth, with Harris, who had 27 pins this season, finishing in the top twelve at the North Coast sectional tournament. "I think we'll do well next year," Freeman said. "Luke has a lot of leadership and Soushians Bahramifar (190) showed a lot of character, and he will be one of our leaders as well." For the girls at the DAL, Piper Lalli came in first, Camila Baxter - second, K.T. Thompson - second, Ori Rogers - third, and Mailena Yang - fourth. At the NCS, Lalli placed third, qualifying

for the state championship, Baxter finished in seventh, Thompson and Patricia Davila Gil finished in the top 12 and the girls finished 13th overall out of 80 teams. For Lalli, making it to state was the capstone to four years of wrestling for Campolindo. "Wrestling has taught me so much about life," Lalli said. "When things got hard, I learned how to push through it. I've never done anything that's been more physically and mentally demanding and it definitely made me a stronger person, and I will take that work ethic forward, knowing what kind of mental strengths you can have and where that can take you." At the CIF, Lalli did win the Pursuing Victory with Honor Award. "This award reflects the intangible qualities that Piper holds such as being a terrific team captain, having a great character and personality along with being so nice," Freeman said. Acalanes Leading the Acalanes boys was senior Dylan Potter (24-17), who had a solid season but came up short at NCS due to a knee injury. In his first season, sophomore Adam Caicedo (5-4) had limited time with the team due to the extended football season. "Adam finished in fourth at the league tournament, which was good since he only had six weeks with the team, so I see that as a success," Nelson said. Ian Sanftner, in only his second year, was a bright spot, finishing third at the league tournament but had a tough draw at NCS. "I expect Ian to come back with a new purpose next season," Nelson said. "Marley Oh is an absolute leader and is going to be a good wrestler, and Sam Whipple just missed making it to the NCS in a very tough 215 weight class." The girls team was led by senior Dakota Goyert, who took seventh at the NCS tournament. "Dakota battled through some injuries midway through the season and I believe she is the first female medalist at Acalanes to place there which is a huge accomplishment," Nelson said. Head Coach Steven Nelson felt it was a strong start for his first year at Acalanes. "When I was hired, I was told that we would be starting the season with six or seven kids and I ended up with 23 kids, so I would have to say that's a pretty big success," Nelson said. "The outlook for our team is nothing but good." Miramonte in just three seasons, Head Coach Louis Suba has seen his roster of wrestlers grow from nine to almost 50 this year. "We're still a very young team considering 80% of our wrestlers are freshmen and sophomores," Suba said. "Most of our first-year wrestlers started the season without having ever seen a high school wrestling match before, so their learning curve was steep." Owen Beidelman, Finn Hura, and Brody Suba all qualified for the NCS championship. "These were three of our hardest workers with the most wins during the regular season, and wrestled against some of the toughest competition in Northern California," Head Coach Louis Suba said. Hura, just a freshman, finished the season with a 31 and 14 record, winning a varsity tournament, took third at the DAL Championships, and won twice at NCS. For the girls team, senior captain Izarra Ballesteros concluded her career with an eighth place medal at NCS. "That was an incredible accomplishment considering that she only started wrestling last year after transferring to Miramonte from a school that did not offer wrestling," Suba said. "She finished the season with a 20-8 record and had five first place medals in regular season tournaments, and won the DAL tournament, earning a first-team all-league honor." Sophomore Claire Casado went from a winless freshman year to winning twenty matches this season, capturing six medals and finishing fourth at the DAL along with a victory at NCS. "Her improvement was astounding," Suba said. "She is a shining example of perseverance." Freshman Cayleigh Farrar won 19 of 30 matches prior to suffering a season ending injury. Suba spoke for all wrestlers on what makes them such a special group of athletes: "Wrestling is a tough sport that's not for everyone. There's a greater chance of heartbreak than there is happiness, but the successful ones come back despite the pain that is just temporary. They go through a lot of adversity but that's how they build character. It's not about the wins and losses or the score at the end of the match. They grow through the struggle, building their confidence and inner strength. It's rewarding to see that transformation and that's what's most important."

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