

# Lamorinda Volleyball heading into competitive league season

By Jon Kingdon



Miramonte Sena Hens #33 Photo Tomas Pineda  
Sofia Swett #88



Amanda Roach #12 Photo Tomas Pineda



Campolindo blockers Aveya Stone #11 Ava Rogers #17 Photo Joshua Uziel



Aveya Stone Photo Joshua Uziel

## CAMPOLINDO

With the usual difficult early season schedule, Campolindo began the season losing four of its first six games, but as its wont, the Cougars have rebounded by winning 15 of their next 19 matches.

"We're working and we're building," said Coach David Chen. "We've got the components and the pieces, but we just have to continue to learn how to compete and fight."

The team has only five seniors, with five juniors, three sophomores, and one freshman, but is not short of leaders, Chen said: "We have good leadership because you don't necessarily have to be a senior to be a leader."

The leaders on offense have been senior Aveya Stone and junior Mia Walloch. "Aveya is our strongest hitter on the outside and has the most experience on the team," Chen said. "We have been depending on both of them too much, so we're trying to diversify and create more depth to avoid a weekend where we were short of players due to illness and other reasons."

Freshman Amelia Knutson, as the team's setter, brings natural experience to the team, having had two older sisters who played for Campolindo. "Amelia carries herself in a way that's very poised for an underclassman," Chen said. "We're trying to get our other setters up to

speed but overall, Amelia's doing a good job."

Senior Gia Okulicz became a libero last season and has made a successful transition to the position. "Gia is stepping into her own," Chen said. "It took her a little time to get used to the new position and now she is doing great."

With the team's improved record, Chen is hoping for the team to keep stepping up its game: "We're still looking for the team to come together and without that you don't have the drive in the right direction yet, but we'll get it. The key to our success is to be consistent on the court and in our mental approach. You can't change yourself. You can't change anything overnight; it's just rising to the occasion."

## ACALANES

Acalanes Head Coach Haley Walsh wanted to know where her team stood right from the start, with a tournament in late August where they played seven matches in two days: "We wanted to stack our schedule because of the new North Coast Sectional model, which is a competitive equity model. Based on that, we would have been the bottom of D1 last year. We decided to play tough teams and either proved we belong in D1 or in another division."

It proved to be a learning experience for Walsh and the team, now with a 12-11 record.

"The idea was to learn what is Acalanes volleyball and where do we rank in competing with the other programs in our area," Walsh said. "We've found some pretty good things. We're serving tough, taking aggressive rips, getting teams out of their system and we're not intimidated when they respond. In the past, our players did have some kind of self-doubt about whether they deserved to be there."

Most of that self-doubt dissipated with a victory over Campolindo 3-2 on Sept. 19, their first win over the Cougars in the last 20 seasons as recorded by MaxPreps. "In that game, we really showed the skills that we're excelling at, and the girls wanted to show what they had been working on all season," said Walsh.

The roster has only five seniors, with 13 juniors and three sophomores. "What's great is that this year, two of our seniors have been on varsity for three and four years, so they know what we've been working towards, and now, we have the pieces that we need to play the game at a high level while acclimating the juniors and sophomores to the competitive level on the varsity and seeing how they are going to help the program," Walsh said.

The offense has been led seniors Addie Ames (70 kills), Annie Baker (67 kills), and Maelin Mason (53 kills), along

with junior Sophia Terry (70 kills). Ames is also second on the team in digs and Baker is the team's leading blocker. "Addi spent a lot of time in the off-season working on defense and familiarizing herself as an outside hitter, which shows in the moves and reads she's making, and she has also been so successful on defense, it's hard to pull her from the court," Walsh said.

"Sophia also worked really hard in the off-season working on her blocking mechanics. She has been very successful on the front row, especially in the schemes we're implementing to shut down our opponents' hitters. Sophomore Sydney Scovic had a huge acclimation period coming up from the JV and has earned the starting role on the frontline with her blocking and attacks, and on the backline as a really strong server."

Mason and setter Emma Seelenbacher have taken on the leadership roles on the team. "They have both worked really hard this season as senior leaders and in our victory over Campolindo - at tight points in the game, they did a great job in making sure the team stuck together and held their teammates accountable in the key moments of the match," Walsh said.

Stella Larkin, who played JV last season, is the team's libero, leading the team with 131 digs. "Stella has been able to handle the faster pace

and is really confident and not afraid to take digs from players that will be playing at Division I colleges," Walsh said.

Walsh is confident as the team heads into the latter half of the season: "We're looking to maintain our strong serves and keep up our positive attacking percentage, and we're going to be a surprise for a lot of teams to face later in the season."

## MIRAMONTE

So far, it's been a year of streaks for Miramonte, starting the season off with five straight wins, but since then they have not been able to break a ten-match losing streak. "We are a fairly young team and we're still learning about each other," Head Coach Leslie Ray said. "This year we had 25 freshmen come out so we're really in the developmental stages in every area. We are learning from each match, and we anticipate constantly getting better. Our record does not indicate how much better we've gotten throughout the season. We have some upperclassmen that are on varsity for the first time and the intensity is just different from playing JV the year before."

The leaders on offense have been Sena Hens on the outside and Amanda Roach in the middle. "Sena is the one that shuts the game down, putting the balls away," Ray said. "Amanda has been our go to middle scorer

when we need a point. Our main plan on offense is to make sure we find the floor. We're not as big as other teams so we can't be that all-power team. We have to be a team that finds areas on the court to score. We're still looking to get our offense together. Our service team and our defensive line are both pretty good, but we need to be more consistent at the net, putting the ball over and finding spots and ways to score."

"Miramonte has primarily been using a 6-2 offense and will also use a 5-1 offense. With the 6-2 offense, the setters become all that more important to the team," Ray said. "We are using Maddie Yun and Anna Ryan in the 6-2 offense and Maddie is our starter with the 5-1 and they have both been doing a great job as setters."

Senior Sofia Swett is the starting libero and freshman Chelsea Dao has also seen playing time. "Chelsea is doing well and still adjusting to coming off the bench," Ray said. "Sofia and Sena Hens have been our key players on defense."

Ball control is something that Ray feels is essential for the team to ultimately be successful: "It's hard to stop a team that can actually make sure they execute the pass. It's a matter of making the right set ups and effectively executing the first touch on the ball which leads to the second and third touch."

# Karate Championships

Submitted by Karate & Fitness USA - Lafayette



Photos provided

Karate & Fitness USA participated in the LA Fiestas 51st annual invitational Karate Championships in September in Los Angeles. Athletes participated from all over the World. KFPUSA athletes aged 4yrs. - Adults competed. The growing sport for

boys and girls to compete locally, regionally, nationally and on the World Stage. Karate is scheduled to be in the 2032 Olympics in Australia. Athletes returned home with 27 Trophies, 11 first place; 8 second place and 8 third place.



Andrew  
1st Place Kata (forms)  
1st Place Kumite (sparring)  
1st Place Kobudo (weapons)



Ara  
1st Place Kumite (sparring) 13-14yrs  
1st Place Kumite (sparring) 15-17yrs.  
playing up  
2nd Place Kata (forms)