

SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS

Miramonte Boys Reclaim NCS Water Polo Title in Sudden Death Overtime

By Marissa Harnett



Photo Doug Kohen

The high school water polo season came to a close in a dramatic North Coast Section tournament. The NCS tournament began on November 2 and concluded on November 12, to name the Miramonte boys' team the champions. Acalanes reached the semi-finals before falling to Miramonte. Campolindo lost in the quarterfinals to Acalanes.

The Miramonte boys' team has dominated high school water polo in the NCS for the last sixteen years; their streak was only interrupted by De La Salle for four of those years in the early 2000s. Last year, Miramonte lost their championship title of five consecutive years to local Lamorinda rival, Acalanes.

In the quarterfinal round #3

Acalanes defeated #6 Campolindo, 20-10 behind seven goals from senior Tanner Cullen, the game's high scorer. Campo was led by senior Tor Jensen with four goals.

Second-ranked Miramonte solidly defeated #7 Washington High School (Fremont), 15-5, to secure their spot in the semi-finals against Acalanes.

Miramonte and Acalanes faced off again in a much anticipated rematch, in the semi-finals of this season on November 10.

Acalanes head coach Clarke Tamriki said before the game against Miramonte that Acalanes was ready to take on their rivals. "We like to compete against this team, so both teams always play hard. We like to think that every year is an NCS op-

portunity. Our team needs to stay as a unit on defense, and execute on when given the chance. We like our chances."

Miramonte coach James Lathrop, said it was a good test. "It has been a goal of the Miramonte team since the start of the season to play for the NCS title and having to play Acalanes in the semi-final. Acalanes knows our team better than anyone else and always challenges us to play our best."

Because of their knowledge of each others' game, neither team could gain a large lead. Miramonte won in a tight, back and forth game, 6-5. Miramonte juniors Charlie Wisner and Jack Fellner split the Mats' six goals, scoring three each. Acalanes junior Connor Reid also

Girls Water Polo NCS Results



Photo Doug Kohen

The Lamorinda girls also fared well. All the teams were ranked in the top four: #2 Campolindo, #3 Acalanes, and #4 Miramonte. Miramonte lost to #1 Las Lomas, 13-6 in the semi-finals and Acalanes fell to Campolindo, 10-9. Campolindo continued to the finals to face Las Lomas. Campo, the defending NCS champions, ultimately lost to the Lady Knights, 10-5.

logged three goals.

With that win, the Mats moved forward to face the #1 San Ramon Valley in the finals at Acalanes High School. San Ramon recorded just one loss in the season and won the East Bay Athletic League title.

Miramonte was not intimidated by San Ramon Valley's record. "Despite that we had six losses, compared to SRV's one, we knew that those losses were against some of the top teams in the state and those games had helped the players to prepare for the championship."

The Saturday final match was an intense fight to the end. It took three overtimes for Miramonte to eek out the 8-7 win.

After falling behind in the first quarter, 4-1, the Mats dug deep and

pulled themselves back into the game with good defense. The teams battled before Wisner scored to tie the game at 7-7, forcing overtime. After two 3-minute overtimes and no decision, the teams played a sudden death overtime. The Mats won the sprint to gain ball possession and implemented a textbook play to set up Wisner to score the winning goal. Goalie Drew Holland made key saves in the second half and overtime to help secure the Mats' win.

Lathrop said his team was prepared for the game. "I was very proud of the determination the players showed and the effort that they put into the season, which culminated in a North Coast Section championship. The team was very confident going into the game."

Girls' Basketball will be Tough in DFAL

By Conrad Bassett



Kiara Harewood Photo Doug Kohen



Janine Loutzenhiser Photo Jordon Fong



Annelise Ito Photo Doug Kohen

A year ago Diablo Foothill Athletic League girls' basketball had the reputation as one of the toughest in California, five of the seven teams qualified for the Northern California Championships, including all three Lamorinda teams. The league looks to be just as tough this year.

Dougherty Valley, 54-7 over the last two seasons, will be very good and Dublin, 15-13, is returning several key players. Alhambra, behind former Dons coach Mike Wilson, looks to improve.

"In most leagues teams that usually make the NCS can plan on five or six league wins against teams that aren't as strong. That is definitely not the case in the DFAL," said Acalanes head coach Chris Russell.

Russell comes to Acalanes with plenty of experience building a boys' program at John Swett (Crockett) to be competitive and last year he led Contra Costa Christian to an NCS berth.

The Lady Dons qualified for the Northern California tournament and recorded 19 wins last year behind since-graduated second team all-DFAL players, seniors Kiara Harewood and Emani Harrison. Harewood is starting at UC Riverside as a true freshman.

However, they do welcome back three seniors—Sophie Taylor,

Meredith Collett, and Olivia Murphy. Taylor, DFAL honorable mention, is the only returning starter and she intends to play at Loyola Marymount next year.

Russell is pleased so far with his senior leadership. "Sophie, Meredith and Olivia are setting the tone in practice every day and are working hard and the rest of the team is following the example."

Other key returners include juniors Jamie Jacobs, Molly Martin, Sam Anderson, and Marie Paladino. The Dons also have a freshman—Taylor Odom. Coach Russell believes she has a "tremendous upside."

The team will stay local for all of their tournaments—traveling to one at Northgate in mid-December, Alhambra, and the West Coast Classic at the end of December.

Lamorinda rivals Miramonte welcome back Kelly Sopak for his third year after he led the Mats into the second round of the state tournament for the second straight year. The Matadors finished 23-7 (8-4 DFAL) last season.

Although Alyssa Johanson graduated and now plays at Washington University in St. Louis, the Mats return a strong nucleus from last year's team.

Senior Janine Loutzenhiser, named second team All-DFAL and

sophomores Megan Reid and Breanna Alford, DFAL honorable mentions, are returning.

Sopak will also be counting on contributions from seniors Devon McDonald and Taylor Kizzie, and junior point guard Carly Gill.

The Mats will be road warriors, playing their first five games on the road—including a visit to defending state champion St. Mary's (Stockton) and to a tournament in Willits.

They then will come home to host their own tournament—The Mats Tip-Off Classic December 9-10. They will also be a host site for the West Coast Jamboree.

Sopak is very enthused about what he has seen in practice so far. "At Miramonte we are going to play one way and that is fast. We are three years into my system and we are further along right now than we have ever been the previous two seasons," he said.

Campolindo finished 25-7 (8-4 DFAL) a year ago and went to the Nor-Cal semi-final game before losing a close game to Sacramento High.

The Cougars also experienced some personnel changes. Former head coach Clay Kallam moved over to Bentley in Lafayette and the new coach is Elgin Leslie.

Leslie is coming from Carondelet High School and will be challenging his squad early and often—they will be playing in the West Coast Jamboree and will take on Piedmont, TerraNova and Salesian in non-league games.

The Cougars lost first team selections Amanda Forshay and Annie Ward to graduation last year and junior honorable mention Annelise Ito to a knee injury. Ito is expected to miss the season.

The Cougars will return junior Laura Hickey along with sophomore Ashley Ewing and senior Malory Brown. Elgin expects contributions from junior Courtney Seyranian and sophomore Kelsey Wixsom.

Leslie noted that there are opportunities as well as challenges in taking over a successful program. "The biggest challenge is the adjustment and finding a comfort level with each other," said Leslie. "Clay is a very good coach, and the girls were used to his system and expectations."

The girls are adjusting to a new coaching style. "Learning a new system and getting used to my expectations will be something that will take us a while. On my side, getting to know the girls and how to put them in the best position to be successful on the court will be something that takes time," Leslie said.

Upcoming games:

Miramonte at St. Mary's (Stockton) at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 23
Acalanes hosts Skyline at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, November 25
Campolindo at Piedmont, time TBA, on Saturday, November 26

Joaquin Moraga Volleyball Takes Second

By Debbie Standing



The Joaquin Moraga 7A girls' volleyball team finished in second place in the annual Foothill Invitational Tournament at the end of October. The Foothill Tournament is double elimination and included schools from Albany, Lamorinda, Walnut Creek, Concord, Martinez, and Benicia.

Back row, from left: Coach Standing, Frannie Lee, Carly Crumbaugh, Kiera O'Brien, Elle D'lorio, Claire Matranga, Assistant Coach Michael Standing; middle row: Mia Lineweaver, Caroline King, Kelsey Budde, Alyssa Roth, Janelle Gong; front row: Sarah Ryles and Emily VanKoll. Not pictured: Sabrina Smith. Photo Sharon Lee