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Girls Soccer Teams Battle in Wide-Open DFAL

By Emily Dugdale



Acalanes' Regan Mcquain (13) and Campo's Kaylee Johns (10) fight for possession Photos Gint Federas

Girls' soccer is in full swing, and the pitch is heating up fast as the Lamorinda neighbors battle each other on the road to NCS. Campolindo, Acalanes and Miramonte entered league play last month, and each team features a different look than last winter.

"As always, the DFAL is the strongest league," Acalanes head coach Evan Sassano remarked. "There are no easy games."

At Acalanes, it's a new team, but the program's culture remains the same. "We like to play an attacking style of soccer that is fun to watch, and hard to stop," Sassano said.

The Dons sit at 3-0-2 overall with a team that includes talented Navy-bound seniors Reagan McQuain and Lexie Silva. Though the team has been plagued by injuries and other absences,

Sassano remains hopeful his girls could bring home the program's first NCS championship.

"The girls are working hard to build their chemistry and we have high expectations for ourselves," Sassano explained. "We still have yet to reach our potential, but the good thing about this group is that we have a very high ceiling."

Campo head coach Ernesto Silva also has a different look to his team this season. In past years, an estimated 90 percent of the players were members of the Lamorinda Soccer Club. This season, the Cougars feature players from more than five local clubs.

"This makes the process of gelling and establishing a system of play a bit more challenging," Silva said.

The Cougar's 4-5-1 record is reflective of

its inconsistency thus far. Silva says it's been a "mixed bag" of performances and "not-so-good" teamwork. However, he's not worried. "I like that with every game, we improve," he said.

Returning key players include senior defender Jessie Mano along with three powerhouse midfielders: seniors Bailey Yuen, Danielle Brown and junior Melissa Wilson.

Silva noted the relative parity amongst DFAL programs this winter, but thinks his team will stick around until the end. "Trying to predict a possible league champion is tough. However, I believe we will be in the mix."

Last season, Miramonte clinched the 2015 NCS Championship, beating the Cougars with an 80th-minute goal from Gina Crosetti. Long-time head coach Mohamed Mohamed has stepped down, however, passing the torch to

Matt Daus. His goal: win another NCS championship. "The pressure is on for a repeat," Daus said.

The Matadors are well into league play and currently own a 3-3-2 record. "I think we are just now starting to hit our stride," Daus said.

"Luckily, the transition of the program from last year to this year was completely smooth and natural and the girls were completely bought in from the beginning," he said.

This year's team boasts a strong senior class held down by co-captains Crosetti – committed to the University of Kentucky – and Kelly McKeen.

"After you win something you have a huge target on your back and everyone is going to give their best shot because they want to try to knock off the defending champion."



Acalanes' Emily Smith (2) and Campo's Melissa Wilson (9) contest a header.

Boys' Basketball: High Hopes, but Work to do as DFAL Play Begins

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"We have high expectations and our goal always is to try and win league," head coach Dave Goldman said. "So, whether that's realistic right after losing by 36 points to Miramonte or not, time will tell."

The Dons rebounded from that dud by getting past Las Lomas 59-46 on Jan. 8. The win leaves Acalanes at 1-1 in DFAL and at an 8-8 overall. As Goldman explained, the Dons will be aiming to take the role of DFAL underdog.

"We're not a real deep team," Goldman admitted. "And our key is we have to play strong, aggressive (and) follow our game plan. We're a team that does not necessarily have the best basketball players or the best athletes night in and night out. So, we have to continually have a good game plan and players have to follow that game plan to win games."



Tom Caprio (5), Sterling Strother (44), Ryan Andersen (10 and James Rickson (5)



Photos Gint Federas Nick Price (11) drives to the basket.

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