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Acalanes boys soccer angling for top spot in league

By Karl Buscheck



Tom Higgins

With the Diablo Athletic League slate rapidly drawing to a close and the North Coast Section postseason approaching, the Acalanes boys soccer team is in the mix to claim first place in the league standings.

"The boys have been performing well all season and as the competition has improved, so has the team," said head coach Paul Curtis. "In the past several matches, the senior class members have really stepped up their performance. It's exciting for everyone to see them rising to the challenge."

After smashing Berean Christina 6-0 in Walnut Creek on Feb. 3, the Dons pushed their record to 14-2-3 overall and 7-1 in DAL. With just one loss in their last nine games, the senior-laden Dons are peaking at just the right moment.

"Drew Wondolowski and Mark Von Hacht the senior co-captains have done a really great job this season," said Curtis, who also praised the impact of seniors Tom Higgins, Gabe Singer, Nixon Murgia, Brody Quinn, Payson Newnam and Bryan Bamford.

"(The captains) have the boys training and performing well to-

gether; working hard and having a lot of fun," Curtis added.

The title contenders have also received season-long contributions from underclassman like juniors Alex Topping, Luke Denham and Oliver Feigin and sophomore Chris Rogers.

Before turning their attention to the playoffs, the Dons will pay a visit to Orinda to cap off the regular season with a game against the Mats on Feb. 10.

"This is a very talented group of players who excel on the field and in the classroom. Juggling their heavy academic load, personal lives and soccer team commitments takes a tremendous amount of effort and focus. Their ability to manage this rather well is one of the significant reasons for their success."

With an 8-8-2 record overall and a 4-3-1 record in DAL, the Mats are also in the chase for an NCS berth. Over the past month, Miramonte has found itself in a rough patch dropping four of five games, including a 3-1 defeat to Campolindo in Moraga. The win brought the Cougars record to 9-9-3 overall and 2-4-2 in league.

"The rivalry game with Miramonte is always a game to look forward to," head coach Shane Carney said in the run-up to the matchup.

The Mats had made a habit of dominating the Cougars in the early 2000s, but Campolindo has "flipped the script" in recent years, as Carney pointed out.

"When we meet, you can throw records and expectations out the window," Carney added. "It usually just comes down to who wants



Drew Wondolowski

it more."

For a team whose roster is heavy on young players, the Cougars have relied on a pair of the squad's veteran contributors.

"(Senior) Rupert Dusauzay has been our most dangerous attacking player and is one of the leading goal scorers in the Bay Area this season," Carney said. "(Junior) Seppi Ortman moved from the midfield to the backline midseason, which gave us some defensive sta-

bility we were missing early on."

Against the Mats, Dusauzay struck two goals and Ortman added the third. Now, the rising Cougars will look to make a late run to grab an NCS spot.

"More than half of our team is underclassmen, which is an extreme rarity at a varsity sport," Carney said. "So we're hopeful our youth has gained enough experience to find some late season success."



Campolindo soccer team

ESPN College GameDay coming to Moraga



ESPN College GameDay comes to Moraga for the Saint Mary's Gonzaga game Feb. 11. From left, hosts Rece Davis, Jay Williams, Seth Greenberg and Jay Bilas. Photo provided

The Saint Mary's Gaels will have a chance to escape from the shadow of their archrival before a national television audience as ESPN's College GameDay will make its first ever trip to McKee Pavilion Feb. 11 for the Saint Mary's-Gonzaga West Coast Conference men's basketball showdown. The game airs at 5:15 p.m. with the GameDay evening edition leading into the primetime telecast.

For those unfamiliar with College GameDay, the pregame program usually draws out hundreds of fans and often a celebrity guest.

No. 18 Saint Mary's routed University of San Diego 71-27 on Feb. 4 to improve to 21-2, 11-2

in the WCC while Gonzaga easily handled Santa Clara the same day, and will likely bring its No. 1 ranking to Moraga for the marquee matchup with the Gaels. The Bulldogs (24-0, 12-0) defeated Saint Mary's 79-56 in Spokane in January.

According to ESPN, each of last three teams hosting College GameDay for the first time won the game that day: Texas A&M, Wichita State and Southern Methodist.

GameDay is hosted by Rece Davis, with Dan Shulman calling the game along with Jay Bilas and reporter Maria Taylor. — Nick Marnell

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