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Miramonte rolls to girls basketball NCS title as all 3 teams prepare for NorCals

By Karl Buscheck



Photo Gint Federas

Montgomery in Santa Rosa on March 1 in the semifinals.

"Getting to the semifinals is not easy and the kids earned it every step of the way," head coach Ashley Valenzuela said after her third-seeded Dons' NCS run came to an end.

The Dons, who enter NorCals with a 19-10 record (6-4 in league), advanced to the penultimate stage of the NCS DII postseason after taking care of No. 14 Rancho Cotate, 64-52, in the opening round and rallying past No. 6 Redwood, 67-65, in the quarterfinals.

"The best part about our postseason run is that everyone had to step up," Valenzuela said. "Every game we were faced with challenging situations that put our kids in a position that every single person had to step up and perform. It was fun to watch them really step up and face those challenges."

Against Redwood, Acalanes didn't claim its first lead until there were 24 seconds left on the clock. During the furious fourth quarter, senior point guard Brooke Panfili poured in 11 of her team high 21 points. Senior post player Emma Godfrey added in 18 points and senior guard Roni Marrone accounted for 15.

The team's NCS march came to an end in the Dons' March 1 loss to Montgomery, but Acalanes has already shifted its focus to the next stage of the postseason.

"The season is not over," Valenzuela said after the defeat. "We have NorCal to look forward to and we need to learn from this game in order to prepare for the next one."

Like the Dons, Campolindo will be taking part in NorCals after exiting in the semifinals of the DIII bracket. The third-seeded Cougars lost 67-48 to No. 2 Salesian on March 1 at Albany High School.

"I am very proud of what we have accomplished this season so far," head coach Art Thoms said in the wake of the semifinal defeat. "We have a great group of girls that care a lot about each other and have a lot of fun."

Co-champions of the DAL National division, the Cougars (23-6, 9-1) head into the next round of the postseason. Campolindo smashed through the first two stages of NCS play, hammering No. 14 Novato and No. 6 Moreau Catholic - their opening round and quarterfinal opponents - by a combined margin of 70 points.

"Haley Van Dyke and Aubrey Wagner really played well against Moreau," Thoms said. "Haley had 35 points and 18 rebounds and Aubrey had 22 points and 13 rebounds. Ashley Thoms had a great game against Novato. Ashley had 25 points and made six 3-pointers."

With more basketball left to be played, Thoms has urged his team to put the challenging semifinals matchup in the rearview mirror.

"The message is to stay together though the good times and bad," Thoms said. "Salesian was a tough loss and we did not play well. Those difficult times are where these young ladies build their true character and a strong bond with each other. Now we regroup and go try to win the NorCal tournament."

The Miramonte girls basketball team secured the NCS Division II title on March 4, pulverizing No. 2 seed Montgomery 84-44 at Saint Mary's College.

The Mats will next compete in the CIF NorCal regional tournament, which begins on March 8 after carving through the NCS bracket. The top-seeded Mats cruised past No. 15 Hayward, 83-30, in the opening round, handled No. 9 Alameda, 75-37, in the quarterfinals and dispatched No. 13 Newark Memorial, 78-55, in the semifinals.

Miramonte begins the next round of postseason play with a 27- 3 record overall (9-1 in league) and ranked No. 25 in the state, according to MaxPreps.

Acalanes narrowly missed out on a chance to square off with their neighbors in the title matchup, falling 53-50 to

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