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

By Karl Buscheck



Photo Gint Federas

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 post-season 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 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."

Campo boys' hoops team loses in NCS championship, but advances to NorCals

By Karl Buscheck



Chris Wright

Photo Gint Federas

The Campolindo boys' basketball team dropped the NCS Division 3 title game to Salesian 55-40 on March 4 at Saint Mary's College, but the postseason run continues on for the upstart Cougars.

The next order of business for Campolindo, (19-11, 7-4) will be to take part in the CIF NorCal regional tournament, which begins on March 8. Even after that NCS setback, the Cougars find themselves in a spot that few would have predicted heading into the season.

"We definitely enjoyed that fact (the we qualified) because I don't think a lot of people thought this team could do that," said head coach Steven Dyer. "But at the same time, we can enjoy all these things more at the end of the season. When you're in the moment, you want to just do your best to focus on the next game."

Dyer believes that the lack of hype surrounding the squad helped drive the Cougars, at least in part, to a second-place tie in the Foothill division of the DAL and their current berth in NorCals.

"I think that's motivated a lot of guys," Dyer said. "I think a lot of the varsity guys

coming back weren't very happy with how their season went last year. So, I think there's a lot of motivation and then we have a lot of young guys who are trying to prove themselves at this level."

The trickiest part of competing in NorCals is that the Cougars will now be running up against teams from far-flung locales across the region.

"It will be obviously very challenging because there's teams from the Sacramento area, teams from way up north, teams from the Peninsula, so you could be playing a lot of good teams," Dyer said. "It will be obviously challenging."

Dyer highlighted a trio of seniors – Chris Wright, Lev Garcia and Mike Navruzyan – for spearheading the team's NCS run into NorCals. After drawing a bye in the opening round as the No. 2 seed, the Cougars thumped No. 7 Hercules, 51-32, as Wright chipped in a double-double with 16 points and 16 boards.

"We earned that No. 2 seed, which was big because we got a home game in the quarterfinals and the semifinals," Dyer said.

Garcia's introduction into the starting five has been crucial to the Cougars' emergence.

"Lev Garcia has been a really good defensive player," Dyer. "Our season's really taken off since he's been in the starting lineup."

Meanwhile, Navruzyan hit a few big 3's off the bench in Campolindo's 68-53 semifinals win over Analy.

"That semifinal game against Analy was maybe the best game we've played all year – both offensively and defensively," Dyer said. "So, it's always good to be playing some of your best basketball in the postseason. So, I'm really proud of the guys."

As the team begins its NorCal drive, the team's depth – the Cougars have received contributions from players up and down the roster – will be essential.

"It's been a group effort, for sure," Dyer said. "And the one thing, or the biggest thing, is that this team plays really well together and is a very unselfish group which makes things fun as a coach."

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