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## Mats, Cougars and Dons girls lacrosse all advance to NCS

By Karl Buscheck



Abigail Burns Photo Gint Federas

After splitting the DAL crown with Campolindo, the Miramonte girls lacrosse team secured the No. 13 seed in the NCS Division I bracket, their first spring playing in the sport's top flight.

"It just shows the growth of the sport in this area and how hard these girls have worked," said head coach Jackie Pelletier. "Some of the girls were bummed to share the league title with Campo, but (then) we step back and we look and their success over four year - that's allowed us to move up to the D I bracket."

The Mats (17-4 overall, 15-1 in league) exited the postseason in the first round of NCS, losing 14-10 to the No. 4 seed Amador Valley in Pleasanton on May 10.

"For such a small school to be right there with the biggest schools in the area is just amazing for us," Pelletier said.

Ranked No. 38 in the state by MaxPreps, the Mats were anchored by a trio of veteran captains.

"The key to our success, 100 percent, has been our senior captains," Pelletier.

Taylor Geary - the league MVP - didn't take part in the postseason, but made it through the first 18 games while

playing on an injured knee. Geary, who will join the team at Claremont McKenna College next season, excelled for the Mats even as she entered her senior season knowing her knee would eventually require surgery.

Pelletier described Lucy Stenovec - the club's sharp-shooting attacker - as a "quiet confident leader" and called Morgan Johnson a "fierce competitor" and the "most tenacious athlete" she's ever coached.

"She will hunt people down on the field," Pelletier said of Johnson.

The co-champion Cougars, who earned the No. 1 seed in the Division 2 tournament, earned a bye in the opening round before smashing past the No. 8 seed Christian Brothers, 16-5, in Moraga on May 12.

With the quarterfinals romp over Christian Brothers, Campolindo - the No. 24 team in the state per MaxPreps - have now produced a 15-game unbeaten stretch.

Captained by seniors Grace Burnite, Claire Cimino, Peyton King and Abigail Burns, the Cougars took the field on May 16 in the semifinals, hosting No. 5 Branson. The finals of the D2 bracket will take place on May 18.

Like Miramonte, Acalanes (12-9 overall, 12-4 in league) took part in the DI bracket, claiming the No. 16 seed before falling 22-7 to No. 1 Novato on the road on May 10 in the first round.

"They really deserved to be up in that top 16 and I'm glad other people recognized that too," head coach Courtney Neff said. "Overall, I'm super proud of all their work that they put in to get there and they put up a good fight (against Novato). I was really proud of them."

The Dons will lose a pair of senior headliners in Julia Mueller and Anna De Roque, who are both set to play at the collegiate level next spring. Despite those departures, Neff believes her team is poised to make another postseason push next spring, noting that the varsity and junior varsity setups are flooded with high-upside underclassmen.

"Acalanes lacrosse overall is a really young program," Neff said. "And I think it has a really bright future and I'm excited to see everything (the girls) can do."

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