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## Season roundup for Lamorinda high school girls soccer

By Jon Kingdon



Kierra Krawec (Acalanes) Photo Gint Federas

techniques and philosophies, Silva credited the girls with buying into his system: "The girls allowed me to mold them the way I needed them for the team to be successful. When they all went along, the change came."

It was a balanced effort for the Cougars starting with the defense. Goalies Mallory Louis and Ashley Mulakaluri and center backs Devon Ortman and Nicole Huebner worked together to only give up 21 goals in 22 games. Says Silva appreciatively: "We were in every game due to our defense."

The improvement in the team's offense was a group effort. Ortman and Huebner were effective in getting the ball to midfielder Molly Ikeya who Silva praised for being "instrumental on the creative side and advancing the ball downfield and scoring herself."

Bringing it all together downfield was sophomore, forward Celia Campo. Says Silva, "Celia grew significantly, becoming the go-to player that got things done. She is very confident and the team rallied around that confidence." Against Analy, a team that had given up only five goals all season, Campo scored two goals.

As Silva waits to learn who his team will play in the regionals, he can't help but be optimistic about next season: "We have a great foundation for the future with a good number of players with great potential who got a lot of experience this year."

Playing in some early tournaments against bigger schools, led to a poor early season record for Miramonte. When the team's record was 3-9-1, coach Barry McQuain wanted his players to keep their eye on the prize, making the NCS playoffs. The Matadors met that goal. Though losing their playoff game to Alhambra 2-1, McQuain felt it was a successful season: "Making the playoffs and going 5-5 in league play are both positives." McQuain also found satisfaction in the team having split their games with NCS champion, Campolindo.

With the team battling through numerous injuries and illness, things improved as the season progressed. Says McQuain: "Though we did rebound from the early season injuries, there was only one game when we were able to dress all 22 girls on the squad."

When the team chose their most valuable offensive player (junior striker Taylor Walthall), most valuable defensive player (sophomore defender Sabrina Grant) and overall most valuable player (sophomore midfielder Olivia Grillo), it was not lost on McQuain that all were underclassman.

Says McQuain: "Sabrina brings great calm and control on the field, Taylor is super quick with good body control and was our leading scorer and Olivia was our overall most valuable player."

With so many underclassmen returning next season, McQuain puts it simply: "We should have a strong team next year."

Despite a 4-13-2 record in his first year as Acalanes head coach Sasha Chalak came away with an optimistic outlook for the future. With a large number of underclassman and bringing in a new system, it was a matter of taking one step back to take two steps forward. Says Chalak: "It was a difficult season that comes with a transition in culture and mentality and mental approach to the game that was not in place before. I was

As the United States rallied around the Olympic Curling team that had a 2-4 record and went on to win their next five matches and the gold medal, the residents of Moraga were able to get behind the Campolindo girls soccer team that was 4-7 and then went 9-0-1 in the next 10 games, ultimately defeating Analy High School 3-0 to win the North Coast Section championship and qualify for the state regional tournament.

How does a team turn it around so abruptly? Head coach Ernesto Silva does not have a simple answer: "It's a combination of many things - the leadership of the team's captains and the seniors; the girls buying into the program; supportive parents and the team peaking at the right time."

With most of the players participating in club soccer, playing for different clubs with different coaches,

pleased that toward the end of the season the team really came together."

On the positive side having to play so many underclassmen who had not played on varsity before, it did provide a foundation for the Dons to build on. Chalak saw the positive in all this: "It turned out to be a good thing. We have a very promising future. Though the record was not what we wanted, in our league play, we improved against every team that we played the second time."

Citing his team's play against Alhambra when his best defender, Caitlin McDonagh, went down with an injury, Chalak saw it as evidence of the growth of the Dons: "When Caitlin went down, the defense pulled together for the rest of the season."

Acalanes had to rely on seniors Emily Smith and Kierra Krawec for most of the scoring early in the season. As the season progressed, a number of the younger players became more inclusive in the offense, helping their confidence.

Chalak is excited about a number of his returning players: "Our leaders for next season will be junior defender Malika Haji, who was a co-captain this year, and sophomore forward Jordan Pratt who was a great worker and who set a great example for her teammates. It always brings value to a program when you have a player like Jordan to push her teammates. Freshman defender, Samantha Hansen led the team in minutes played, starting every game and never leaving the field." Chalak is also anticipating contributions from the Acalanes JV captains, freshman Olivia Parnell and sophomore Maile Broad.

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