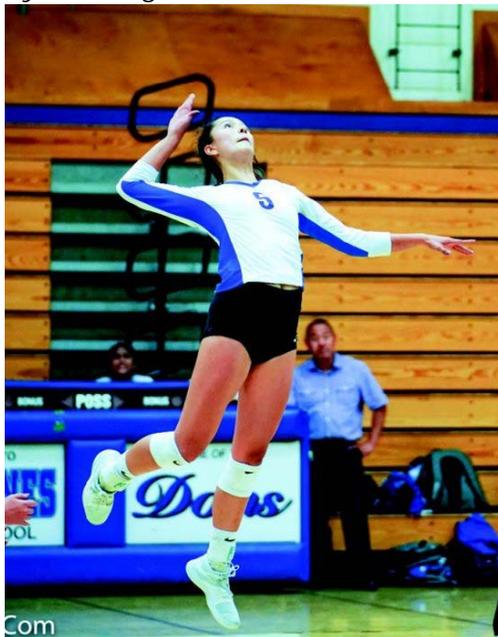


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Lamorinda Girls Volleyball preview

By Jon Kingdon



Madi Risch Photos Gint Federas

Coach Peter Chao brings 25 years of experience to his first-year coaching at Miramonte. Miramonte finished last season with a 16-12 record and a spot in the state tournament is a veteran squad that brings a lot of experience to this year's team says Chao appreciatively: "We have a good core of seniors that are providing great leadership for the younger players. Our co-captains are opposite (right side) hitter Meaghan Hohman, outside hitter Jennifer Giron and libero Lauren Lim."

Hohman led the team last season with 255 kills and Giron was second with 168 kills and digs (316). Lim led the team with 504 digs. Gracie Guidotti was second on the team in assists with 158 last season and will be looked up to replace Tati Luevano, who was last year's assist leader.

The defense is being led by senior libero Lauren Lim and her sister, sophomore Haley Lim.

Senior Kaylyn Goode, who led the team last season with 27 blocks, will team with junior Mackenzie Gripp as middle blockers.

Playing young players is not a concern for Chou: "I have two freshman who were both standouts on their club teams, outside hitters, Casey Roy and Kate Swan."

The Matadors opened their season with a dominating 3-0 win over San Leandro. Chao is very positive about what he has seen so far: "This is a very good group of young women that are willing to push

themselves to the limit. They are willing to learn new techniques. They are utilizing their athleticism and speed more than they did previously. It is important because we are not the biggest team out there."

Junior Julia Martin, who suffered a serious knee injury last season, will be unable to play this season as she continues her rehabilitation but will be serving as the team's manager and contributing any way she can this season.

Chou sees this team as a work in progress: "As the season moves on, I am looking for increased chemistry on the team. I am impressed with the girls' willingness to learn and improve. We have good volleyball intelligence and should improve in our ability to adjust on the court."

Two years ago, Acalanes won the state tournament. Last year, they finished with a 13-16 record. Winning the state tournament put a lot of pressure on Acalanes according to head coach Ernie Rodriguez: "There is definitely less pressure on us this season than there was last year when we were coming off a championship season when we had the bullseye on our back and everyone wanted a piece of us."

There are still five seniors who were members of that championship team and Rodriguez is counting on them to provide the leadership for his team. Says Rodriguez: "We're a young team with only five seniors, three sophomores and six juniors, but we are ready to go."

On offense, seniors outside hitter Madi Risch and Roxie Cummings and middle hitter Elsa Clever are the leaders up front. Junior Lane Webster is the starting setter for the team.

Senior libero Cailey Mcvay, who Rodriguez describes as "a very good defender and passer," is the key player on the Don's defense

With only six teams in their league, Acalanes is playing in three tournaments: The East County, San Ramon Valley and Sonoma Valley Invitations. Says Rodriguez, "We want to be better in the gym prior to league play. As the season progresses, I am looking for consistency in our play. I want us to play at a high level all the team and see us come together as a team."

Acalanes made it to the second round of the playoffs, losing 3-2 to Moreau Catholic. In their opening game this season, they got some revenge by defeating Moreau Catholic 3-1. Said Rodriguez: "Last season we let our last match slip away and defeating Moreau Catholic in our opening match was a big statement for our team."

Playing in front of an enthusiastic home crowd has become a tradition at Acalanes. The team shares that enthusiasm, says Rodriguez: "They bring the energy. Our players take pride in being louder than the other team."

With a record of 169-59 over the last six seasons at Campolindo, head coach John Vuong has established a standard of excellence that is to be envied.

Vuong is cautiously optimistic about this year's team: "Last year we had a number of seniors and this year we only have three seniors and a lot of sophomores on the team so we are still trying to figure it out." Having won four of their first five matches, it appears that things seem to be coming together.

The captains voted on by their teammates are senior libero, Sarah Carrasco and juniors setter Audrey Pak and middle hitter Sophia Newman.

Senior libero Sarah Carrasco has been battling injuries so far this year and sophomore Brianna Lee has

been filling in that position when Carrasco has not been available.

Vuong is patient with his team: "We are playing in a very even league. It's a process. We are a very balanced team. We are learning how to play with each other prior to the beginning of league play. With all of the girls having played club volleyball after the season, it has prepared them for our season."

The Cougars are participating in four invitational tournaments: Albany, San Ramon, East Bay and the Southern California Nike Tournament, competitions that Vuong welcomes. "This toughens our team up in getting ready for the post-season tournament."



Miramonte's Kaylyn Goode at practice



Campolindo played Bishop O'Dowd on Aug. 28, pictured Elizabeth Canon.

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[back](#)

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