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Lamorinda boy's water polo preview

By Jon Kingdon



Photo Gint Federas

Hope springs eternal as the Lamorinda boy's water polo teams start their march through a series of tournaments and nonconference games prior to their conference games.

Campolindo, coming off a 24-4 record last year and making it to the championship game in Rocklin before losing to Sacred Heart Prep by a score of 5-4 has picked up where they left off winning three of their first four games. Despite losing four seniors who have gone on to play in college, head coach Miles Price speaks confidently about the Cougars prospects: "We are a veteran team with a lot of experience despite our losses through graduation. Still we are always looking to increase depth and there is room for the players to move up on the roster." With a 9-2 record so far this season, the Cougars are setting themselves up well for the post-season.

The captains for this year's team are seniors Garrett Dunn, Marcus Longton and Giorgio Alessandria who, according to Price, "are the leaders of the team in and out of the water."

Last season, Campolindo outscored their opponents by 209 goals and Price feels that the of-

fense is a solid group this year as well: "We have good size and speed. Our players have good water polo IQ as they have all for the most part participated in club water polo."

The defense is led by junior goalie Logan Estes and a freshman, West Temkin. Says Price: "Logan is tall, athletic with a good frame and has experience."

The overall goal for the Campolindo defense is to play with a high level or press, avoiding getting into zones and drops. "We want to be a good transition team," says Price.

Campolindo has three tournaments on their schedule. The Cougars have already played in the Santa Barbara Invitational, going 2-1 and will be playing in the South Coast Tournament in Newport and the North-South Tournament in Atherton later in the season.

Price, who played water polo at UC Santa Barbara and professionally in Spain and Australia, appreciates the challenges his team faces: "There are a number of high-level teams that we compete against in these tournaments and it's a good challenge to ourselves."

Price sums up the prospects

for Campolindo succinctly: "The key to the season is to play to our potential. We are a talented team and they have all shown up in really good shape."

Despite a 13-12 record last season, Miramonte closed with a rush, making it to the third round of the playoffs before losing to Campolindo. This is a largely veteran team as noted by head coach James Lathrop: "We have a good mix of seniors, juniors and sophomores. It's a good group that fun to work with. They are ready to learn and improve." After a slow start this season, the Matadors have won their last four games.

The captains for the team as voted on by the players are seniors Leo Berkman, Peter Hillen and Reid Schioldager. The lone junior in this group is Jackson Painter. It's not common for a junior to be named to be a co-captain but, says Lathrop: "Jackson is a very talented player and a hard worker. He is a leader by example." Painter played for the Youth National Team this summer.

Berkman and Painter are key players for the Miramonte offense but the group has a lot of depth, says Lathrop: "As a rule, we don't want to rely on one or two players. We have a balanced attack and any number of players can step up and be factors on offense."

On defense, senior Spencer Campos will be the starting goalie. He will be helped greatly by Peter Hillen, says Lathrop: "Peter is a key player on the defense. He is always assigned to guard our opponent's top player."

Miramonte played in the Elite 8 tournament this past weekend in Southern California at Harvard-Westlake High School and will be playing in the Southern California Tournament, the North-South Tournament and the Memorial Tournament.

"Playing in these tournaments allows us to test ourselves both physically and mentally against the top teams in California," says Lathrop. "It allows us to prepare for league play and the NorCal tournament."

The schedule for the teams is a little different this year with each of the teams in the league playing home games against each other, which Lathrop appreciates: "It allows us to play twice as many 'rivalry' games."

Lathrop's goal for the team is simple: "We just want to keep getting better every day in our skills and tactics. We have a good senior group and I'm excited about the underclassmen. I'm looking for the growth of the team and our younger players as the year progresses."

Coming to Acalanes from Las Positas College, first year head coach Robby Arroyo is no stranger to Acalanes and the Bay Area. Says Arroyo: "I live in the area and have been involved with the local water polo teams and am well aware of the strong history that Acalanes has had in water polo." As a four-year starter for the University of California water polo team, Arroyo played for Acalanes legend Steve Heastman for whom the aquatic center at Acalanes has been named.

The Dons have showed initial improvement from last year's 13-12 team beginning the season winning six of their first eight matches. Having lost four of their last five matches shows that there is still a ways to go. Arroyo appreciates the maturity of his team: "We are a mentally tough team with a lot of seniors contributing. The eleven seniors know that this is their last opportunity to compete and it shows in both practices and the games. The experience we bring has helped us out in a lot of tough games."

The Dons play an aggressive offense, getting the ball down the

pool as quickly as they can, getting behind the defense leading to some easy goals. Leading the offense are seniors Max Stryker and Jake Stone along with juniors Mac Darin and Charlie Betencourt. "The key, says Arroyo, is that all of the players on offense are working well together."

Senior Alex Archer is a key on the defense along with Stryker, Darin and Betencourt. In their eight games so far, Acalanes has outscored their opponents by 18, only giving up 8.7 goals per game. Arroyo has been utilizing two goalies, senior Jackson Kirke and sophomore Parker Tomkins, who plays about a quarter of the games. Both have contributed to the team's early success, says Arroyo: "Jackson has transitioned to goalie over the summer and has done a fantastic job. He has a huge wing span. Parker is learning the position well which is setting up to be our primary goalie the next two years."

Acalanes has already played in the Menlo Invitational and will be playing in the Southern California Invitational in October. Arroyo appreciates what the team can get out of these tournaments: "We get to play against the elite teams and players from around the state and the country, preparing up for the league season."

Besides the huge group of seniors, Acalanes has had a number of new players as well, which Arroyo sees as a positive: "Some of the additional players are taking time to learn but we have been able to work through the new ideas and approaches of playing and studying game film. As with any new coach, you're introducing new offensive and defensive schemes but I also recognize what they do well and what the prior coach has taught them. I'm always looking to see where we can add things in."

Acalanes-Miramonte girls water polo face off in rivalry game

By Jon Kingdon

Whenever there is a so-called rivalry game, commentators are always quick to say that with such games, you can throw out the record book. A comment like this generally occurs when one of the teams has a bad record. However, when both teams come into a rivalry game with top records, it becomes that much more

of an anticipated event.

Such was the case when the undefeated (13-0) Acalanes girls water polo team took on the defending champion (8-2) Miramonte team Sept. 26 at Miramonte High School. In a match that lived up to expectations, Acalanes remained undefeated, coming out on top 10-6.

Leading 7-2 at the half, Acalanes held off a late charge by Miramonte who got as close as 9-6. Acalanes head coach Misha Buchel's strategy was to attack and be aggressive: "We were really pushing the ball up the pool and feeding the ball inside to Lexi Rowell, Claire Rowell and Jewel Roemer and we were able to take

advantage of a number of power plays."

This however was a game won by the defense. The Dons were particularly concerned with containing Miramonte's Katie Lyons and were pleased with holding the Matadors to only six goals. Goalie Ava Donleavy had several stops in key situations and was, as

Buchel described her, "a rock back there." Besides Donleavy's performance, the defense led by Alex Fellner and Rowell protected Donleavy with several blocked shots.

Miramonte will have a chance to get their revenge the last game of the season, which will be played at Acalanes.

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