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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Lamorinda girls' volleyball builds foundation for future success



Photo Gint Federas

Three sets of sisters are on the Campolindo roster. Back row, from left: Molly Mitchell, Quinn Heydenfeldt, Kate Dendinger; front: Megan Mitchell, Ella Heydenfeldt, Anna Dendinger

By Jon Kingdon

Though some sports were able to transition, to a point, outside, it was not as simple for the volleyball teams. "We did everything outdoors," Acalanes head coach Haley Walsh said. "There was a lot more retrieving balls and dealing with the elements."

For Miramonte head coach Lindsay Ray, it was a matter of hitting the ground running: "We just started three weeks ago. We only had 2-3 practices prior to our first match."

John Vuong, Campolindo's head coach, focused on getting the team in shape: "We could not practice inside or outside, so we did a lot of conditioning and plyometric training to get into shape. We did a lot of stretching under the guidance of my assistant coach Dave Chan, who is a physical therapist."

Campolindo

There has been no shortage of players for Campolindo with 20 on the varsity, 12 on JV and 12 on the freshman teams. "There are some players that are missing practice due to their club team commitments," Vuong said. "We're just glad to play, particularly for our seniors to finish their careers. I've had some of them since they were freshmen, and to have them not

play this year would have been wrong."

It's a family affair for the Cougars with three sets of sisters on the roster - Kate (Sr) and Anna (Soph) Dendinger, Ella (Jr) and Quinn (Jr) Heydenfeldt and Molly (SR) and Megan (Jr) Mitchell. "This is the first time I've had three sisters and I wanted them to have the experience of playing alongside each other," Vuong said.

The veteran leadership has been crucial under these trying conditions, which Vuong has relied on. "All of our seniors have been leaders," Vuong said. "The younger players have particularly looked up to Kate Dendinger and Molly Mitchell for advice."

On offense, Dendinger and Mitchell have been key players as outside hitters. Olivia Knutson and Erin Thomas, both of whom are all-around players, are also having solid seasons. Freshman Chilotta Bell has shown a lot of potential and will be counted on to do a lot more next season.

Senior Brianna Lee has been solid as the team's libero bringing a lot of playoff and state experience. Junior Olivia Wiseman provides good depth and will step in next year as the libero's starter.

Vuong made it a point to

see that the seniors receive a large amount of the playing time. "I let it be known that this was a special year for the seniors because it's such a short season and because how much they had contributed to the team the prior three years. For the young players, next season will start in only a few short months."

Miramonte

The Matadors have only two seniors on the roster, libero Jenna Foster, and defensive specialist Nicolle Wagner. "It has been going smoothly," Ray said. "We have a lot of sophomores and juniors on the varsity this year."

Leading the offense has been sophomore Amber Chu and junior Natalie Kurtz. "Amber is more confident this year," Ray said. "She's starting to see the blocks a lot better when she's hitting. Natalie, our middle blocker, has also been an offensive threat this year."

On defense sophomore Annika Blas was moved to defensive specialist from the outside. According to Ray, "Annika's confidence has really improved as she is more comfortable playing in the back row. We also have some freshmen that are getting playing time there."

Foster's leadership on the court has been important to the team's stability. "Jenna is a hard worker and gets lots of touches. She brings the team together on the court," Ray said. "If we're struggling, Jenna will talk everyone through their mistakes and makes sure everyone stays calm. She communicates early which helps to avoid collisions and is a real strength in her game."

The short season has become even more abbreviated for Miramonte with two games canceled due to virus concerns with their opponents. With such a young team, Ray is optimistic about the team's future: "With such a short preseason, it's been a little tough. A lot of the girls don't play club, so they haven't had any indoor volleyball training for a while, but it's been coming back to them and we're working through it."

... continued on Page C2

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