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Tradition Lives On

By Justine Sgalio

Tradition was upheld Friday, September 25, at Miramonte High School's annual men's water polo alumni game where the undefeated alumni took the 16-11 victory against the varsity squad at Bill Brown Aquatic Center in Orinda. With close to 50 Miramonte men's water polo alumni in attendance and countless parents, family and friends from over the decades on hand to cheer them on, the teams took to the pool to battle it out. The alumni took an early lead but the Matadors stayed in the game coming back to make it 5-4 alum at the end of the first quarter with the help of Miramonte's Joey Fabian, junior, and a breakaway goal at by senior Zach Taapken with 25 seconds to go. The Matador defense and sophomore goalie Tyler Barker allowed the alumni only three goals in the second quarter, scored by veterans Andrew Dennis, Sean Joy and Miramonte's own assistant coach Chris Lathrop. The goals gave the alumni the lead, 8-6, heading into halftime. The Miramonte offense battled back after the break, with goals from sophomore Robbie Fluegge, Fabian and the team's co-captain, senior John Holland, but their efforts could not match the force of the alumni squad. The alumni scored six goals in the third quarter, one from Miramonte's own head coach James Lathrop, making it 14-9 alum, going into the fourth. The Mat's defense held the alumni to only two goals in the fourth, but were not able to come away with the win. The alum maintained their tradition of victory with a 16-11 win. "The alumni game is a fun tradition that shows how special Miramonte water polo has been to so many people," said Miramonte head coach James Lathrop. The alumni game began over 20 years ago at the lead of former Miramonte head coach, now coach emeritus, Bill Brown. Brown founded Miramonte's water polo program in 1967, where he was the head coach for 37 years. "When you're younger and you're a coach, you're really worried about the next game, and you lose track of the people you became friends with," said Brown. "The alumni game allows you to do that. You realize that all these guys have become friends. Now I see their kids, some of whom have gone through our water polo program here at the high school...it's a great tradition to have." "Bill is the one person who really bridges all these years," said Lathrop. "He's the reason for all this. It's a really great tribute to him." The event truly proved to be a family affair, as father-son duo Bob and Teagan Hoover matched up on opposing sides to duke it out. "I've been playing in the alumni game off and on for 20 years, and this was a goal I set," Bob said. "I knew I had to stick it out and stay in shape so I could have this opportunity to play against him one time in my life. It's been a great, great experience." Teagan, a junior, was excited to face off with his dad, the man who taught him the game growing up, in a real game situation. "He's the one who taught me how to play, but I've never played against him in an actual game. It was a fun experience to be in the water together," Teagan said. "Maybe someday I can even play against my son." Miramonte heads to Alhambra on Wednesday for their first league game of the season.

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