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Boys' Volleyball Growing but Faces Challenges

By Marissa Harnett



Reece Yamamoto #14

Photos Ohlen Alexander

Boys' volleyball teams in Lamorinda vary in experience. While Campo and Acalanes have been building their teams for the last several years, Miramonte's team is new after a four-year hiatus.

All three Lamorinda teams faced-off for the first time in league play last week. Campolino came out on top, beating both Acalanes and Miramonte. The Cougars are undefeated in DFAL action (4-0) and boast a 27-2 record overall. Acalanes (2-3) defeated Miramonte (1-5) on April 19 in straight sets, 25-16, 25-14, 25-18.

Despite the new program, Miramonte head coach Daniella Inzerillo is impressed with the talent and diversity of her team. "Having such a mix of athletes playing this sport keeps it exciting and allows the team to grow every practice," Inzerillo explained. "We have basketball, soccer, tennis, and football players on the team that are all coming together to form a solid volleyball team."

The brand new Mats team faced the six-year strong, defending NCS champs, Campolino on April 17. The Cougars jumped out to a 5-0 lead. Miramonte appeared intimidated, but after a few long rallies the Mats notched some points of their own. Still, Campo took the first set 25-8.

Miramonte's energy increased in the second set. Campo jumped to an early lead again, but the Mats managed to come back to within one

point. After Campo pulled ahead a second time, Miramonte senior Matt Ent served four consecutive points, bringing the score to 11-12. Miramonte could not hold on, though, and the more experienced Cougars surged, taking the second set 25-14.

The third set was a repeat of the first set, and Campo won the match 25-8, 25-14, 25-8.

Despite graduating six seniors last

year, Campo head coach David Chen credits his experienced players with creating a solid foundation. "We have been very fortunate to have had a skilled group of athletes the previous year to stabilize our program," he said.

The program has had its growing pains, however. "They are enjoying the success of our previous athletes' struggles and heartbreaks," Chen explained. "Having our current players respect the success and the journey to get here, while still asking them to re-define themselves and take the program to a whole new level has been the biggest challenge."

Acalanes had a good turnout for their team this year. While the demand for a second JV team existed, the Dons could not obtain a second coach, and so were unable to utilize that talent.

Head coach Mason Mulvaney remarked on the wide variety of athletes that came out to play this year. "The talent is a mixed bag, I have some very experienced leaders of my team, Dan Inouye and Ben Savage are my captains, both are all-league players," he added, "I also have some new guys who are great athletes but are new to the sport."

Due to such differing levels of ability, results vary accordingly, but Mulvaney sees positive progress.

The rivals will match up again in May.



WCC Co-Champions Prepare for WCC Tourney Tomorrow

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"We've put ourselves in a good position," said Saint Mary's coach Lisa Alipaz, looking ahead to the post-season. "We're the highest nationally ranked team in conference, so if there's a tie with records, it goes to national ranking."

The Gaels finish a regular season filled with "firsts" with a 12-8 overall record and a 7-1 conference record. Junior Jenny Jullien became the school's highest ranked player ever when she reached No. 18 in the country (she finished the season at No. 20), and the Gaels tallied their first win against a top ten opponent when they defeated No. 7 Stanford on February 16.

"It's been a bit of a roller-coaster," Alipaz said of the season. "We've had some amazing highs—the win over Stanford was probably the highlight of my ca-

reer—and we've had some lows, but we've managed to stick together and find ways to get together. I think the best is yet to come for us."

The Gaels team wrapped up their impressive season on April 14, clinching a share of the WCC title, by defeating Loyola Marymount 4-3 in a nail biter.

Senior Catherine Isip and her partner, junior Audrey Leitz, were the only Gaels tandem to notch a win in doubles.

"It was tough watching courts one and three go down," Isip said. "But luckily my partner and I pulled it through." This was only the fifth match for Isip and Leitz as a pairing, but so far, the two have gone undefeated.

In singles, the Gaels showed their strength. Jullien recorded a 6-1, 6-1 win at number 1, while jun-

ior Jade Frampton earned a 6-1, 6-3 win at number 4.

Isip was the next to wrap up, and on Senior Day, she walked off the court a 7-6, 6-2 winner over. "I lost to (Parravi) last year," said Isip. "It felt really good to beat her."

But the match wasn't over. With the score tied 3-3, Isip's doubles partner had dropped her first set 4-6 on court six. While Isip and her teammates cheered her on, Leitz rallied, taking the second and third sets 6-2 and 6-3, winning the match, and clinching a share of the title for the Gaels.

"It's been an up and down season," Isip said after her last match at the Korth Tennis Complex. "It's bittersweet, but I couldn't have asked for a better ending. Seeing my doubles partner clinch for us, it was amazing."



Audrey Leitz

Photo Tod Fierner