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Lamorinda Soccer Prepares for Postseason

By Karl Buscheck



Samantha DeVecchi Photos Gint Federas

The NCS Championships are exactly a week away, and all three of the Lamorinda girls' soccer teams are virtual locks to be there when the playoffs begin.

On Feb. 6, Miramonte and Acalanes played to a scoreless draw in Orinda. The result marked a major departure from the last time the Mats and the Dons met back on Jan. 7 when the teams combined to pour in eight goals.

In the rematch, it was the pouring rain that kept either team from finding the back of the net. On a stormy Friday night, the first chance fell to the Dons just six minutes into the contest, but Mats' senior goalkeeper Maritza Grillo made a lunging save to stop the header.

After a quiet first half, Miramonte began to dominate the possession when the teams returned from the break. Just eight minutes into the half senior Maddie Geary nearly handed the Mats a 1-0 edge, but instead lofted her shot just over the bar. With 18 minutes left in the game, Mats' senior Samantha DeVecchi stormed down the field on a fast break and sent her close-range shot crashing off the side of the net.

The Dons almost stole the game in the final five minutes. Sophomore Allison Merrill attacked from the left wing, firing a shot that floated just over the top of the goal.

Even though the Mats had to settle for a tie, head coach Mohamed Mohamed was impressed with the way that his team battled with the Dons, who not only sit in first place in the DFAL standings with an 8-1-1 record but are also the early favorites to claim the NCS title.

"Our team is peaking and it's peaking at the right time," said Mohamed, whose Mats occupy the fourth spot in the league standings with a 5-3-3 record. "Acalanes is in first place and we showed that we should have had them."

With the Mats having earned either a win or a draw in six of the past seven games, Mohamed likes the direction that the team is headed with NCS looming. "I think as the playoffs come, Miramonte will be ready to play," he predicted.

Ernesto Silva, the head coach of Campolindo, also thinks his squad will be ready to play. "We are doing really well. We are moving in the right direction No doubt about that."

After tying Miramonte 0-0 on Feb. 4, the Cougars are stationed in the No. 3 spot in the DFAL standings with a 5-2-3 record. While pointing out that the team has received plenty of contributions from its younger players, Silva gave the most credit for Campolindo's success to the senior core. "The seniors that we have really have stepped up and made it what it is to this point."

The group of standouts includes the likes of Sam Vankoll, AJ Morgan, Emily Parish and Bridget Coleman. Campolindo will face a difficult test in the final game of the regular season, as the team is slated to face off against Acalanes on Feb. 12. Still, Silva is highly optimistic about how the end of the season will play out: "Hopefully the story lines are still to be written."



Allison Merrill had a shot on goal.



Maritza Grillo had critical saves.

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