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## Mats, Dons Earn CIF Playoff Berths

By Conrad Bassett



Roni Marrone Photos Gint Federas

After a grueling run through the NCS playoffs, two of Lamorinda's girls' basketball teams have qualified for the upcoming California Interscholastic Federation tournament. Both Miramonte and Acalanes will fight for the state title.

Miramonte, the DFAL and NCS Division III champions, sports a 28-2 record and has qualified for the Open Division playoffs as the No. 2 seed. The Open Division boasts the top teams from across all divisions. Miramonte is the only public school in the Open Division.

Head coach Kelly Sopak emphasized the Mats' accomplishment. "I told our kids that when CIF set this Open Division concept up it was not designed for a small public school like Miramonte, but due to their hard work and resolve, we are a big part of it now."

The Mats begin their quest for the state title at home on March 13 against Pinewood (Los Altos Hills). Pinewood (24-2) won the Central Coast Section Division IV championship. Pinewood looks to avenge a 73-60 Jan. 3 loss at Miramonte.

"We had a tough game against them in January and both teams have improved so it is going to be exciting," said Sopak. "I am excited that our sixth man and fans will get the opportunity to experience an Open Division playoff game."

Miramonte swept the NCS playoffs blasting Del Norte (Crescent City) 80-33 in the first round and followed that up with strong wins over Campolindo 89-36 in the quarterfinals and Moreau Catholic 80-33 in the semifinals before defeating Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland) 72-66 for the title.

Sopak has challenged his team all year with a grueling schedule, and the team is playing well headed into NorCals.

Acalanes (22-7) also qualified for the CIF playoffs after advancing to the semifinals of the

NCS Division III playoffs.

"This is pretty awesome. I am proud of the girls, and it is going to be exciting," said head coach Chad Wellon.

In the NCS tournament, the Dons crushed San Rafael 65-21 in their first round match. In the quarterfinals, they whipped Encinal 78-61, before falling in the semifinals to O'Dowd 74-35.

With such a strong showing in the NCS playoffs, the Dons were awarded a No. 4 seed in a 12-team division and a first-round bye. Acalanes will host the winner of the Shasta/Florin matchup played on March 11.

"After seeing both Miramonte and Dublin win sectional championships, I realized how tough the DFAL is," Wellon explained. "Hopefully playing against both of those teams twice along with a

high caliber team like Bishop O'Dowd will be good preparation for the state tournament."  
The Dons' CIF run tips off at 6 p.m. on March 14



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