

LAMORINDA SPORTS

To the State Finals!

Campo advances to the CIF Division III state title game

By Michael Sakoda



Scott Chen

The Campolindo boys' basketball team advanced to the CIF Division III title game after sneaking past Drake, 50-44, in the Regional finals on March 21. They will face Damien (28-5, No. 8 in CA) of La Verne, the winners of the SoCal bracket, at Haas Pavilion in Berkeley March 27.

In the match-up against Drake, the game had a slow start.

Trailing 17-18 in the second quarter, senior captain Scott Chen found Sean Yamamoto who knocked down a three. Moments later, Chen stole a Drake pass, split free throws, and gave the Cougars a 21-18 lead with 1:16 in the half.

Campolindo clung to a 23-22 lead at the half.

"We average 23 a quarter," said head coach Matt Watson of the slow pace. "It felt like it was going to be whoever's going to make a shot first."

Drake hit back-to-back three-pointers to start the third, taking a 28-25 lead, and it was time for the big man to go to work. The third quarter belonged to senior captain and DFAL Player of the Year Chris Hansen, who scored six straight for the Cougars and eight of his game-high 22 in the period.

"He's been unbelievable all year," said Watson of his 6'7" center. Hansen also had 17 rebounds in the game.

With 4:12 left in the game, Campo led 39-38, and Chen blew past three Pirate defenders, scoring a basket and finding himself at the line again. He finished the three-point play, and it looked as if Campo might finally pull away.

The Pirates responded to take a 44-42 lead with 2:25 to play.

"It felt like that was a big momentum shift," said Watson. "I [told] the guys, 'We didn't lose anything yet, all we have to do is get the ball to the big man and let him go to work.'"

Yamamoto split a pair of free throws with 2:06 left, cutting Drake's lead to 44-43, and then the Cougars defense buckled down.

Chen stripped a Pirates' guard, and Austin Clarke split another pair of free throws on the extra possession. Tied at 44, with 1:04 left, Clarke grabbed Campo's second steal in the final two minutes, and Hansen knocked down two free throws, giving Campo the lead with 37 seconds left to play.

"We knew we had the fouls to give, so we were being very aggressive (on defense)," said Watson.

Campo forced three turnovers in the final two minutes, propelling the Cougars to a 50-44 win.

Campolindo's Run to the Finals a Team Effort

By Conrad Bassett



Sean Smith



Chris Hansen

Photos Gint Federas

After a run that ended in the NCS semifinals, the Campolindo boys' basketball team rebounded in the California Interscholastic Northern California Division III tournament.

With a No. 2 seed, Campolindo drew a bye in the first round and then defeated Sacred Heart Cathedral 79-65 on March 14 to advance to the NorCal semifinal against Sierra (Manteca) on March 17.

The Cougars took their first lead 12-11 in the game behind senior Chris Hansen's put back with 3:18 to go in the first. Campo ended the period on

an 8-0 run highlighted by senior Tiger Garcia's put back with one second left.

Campo led 39-29 at intermission. The Cougars built a 54-40 lead at the end of three. Sierra rallied in the fourth quarter.

With 4:03 to go in the game, Hansen fouled out. Campo led 59-53, but Sierra seemed primed to make a game ending run. However, junior Austin Clarke hit back-to-back three pointers within 37 seconds, bringing the crowd to its feet.

After Hansen went out, head

coach Matt Watson explained his strategy. "Once we ran the double reverse offense we knew Austin would either get the 6-8 center guarding him on the perimeter so he could exploit him for a layup or he would get a 5-7 guard trying to stop him shooting the 3. The 'three' prevailed."

The Cougars went on to win 73-61. Watson was pleased with the team effort. "Sean Smith ran the point guard position to perfection as well as senior Scott Chen running the low block and exploiting their team's defense."



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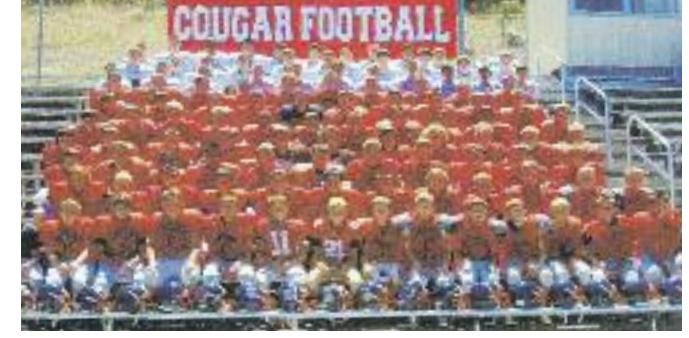
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