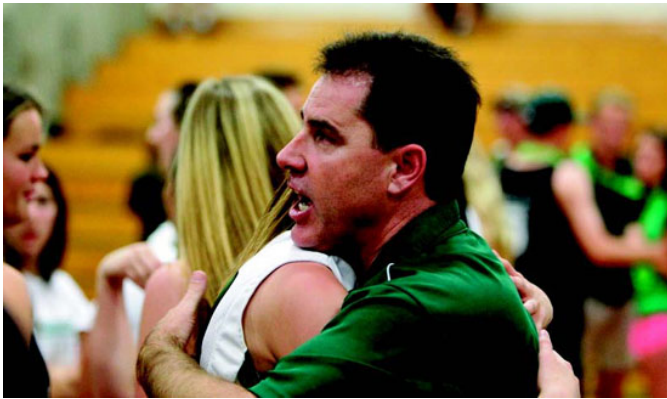


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## Coaches, Students and Community All Contribute to Remarkable Success of Lamorinda Prep Programs

By Karl Buscheck



This year Kelly Sopak led the Mats' girls' basketball team to another NCS title. Photos Gint Federas

head baseball coach at Miramonte, shared a similar perspective.

"Our coaching staff and our philosophy of hard work and being smart about what we do, it really goes a long way," Dell'Aquila said. "Ourselves, Campolindo and Acalanes, that's what we rely on."

Like Renno and Dell'Aquila, Randy Takahashi, the athletic director at Acalanes, couldn't overstate the influence that the coaches have on their programs.

"Having good coaches is greatly important," Takahashi said. "There's so much that you have to do as a high school coach in the Lamorinda community. You have to not just know your sport well, but you also have to be very organized. You have to be a great communicator. You have to be a fundraiser. You have to be a counselor to the kids."

At Campolindo, there is such an array of standout coaches that whittling down the list to just a few stars isn't even possible.

"It's really hard to single out coaches because we have such a great overall staff," Renno said.

While Renno had a difficult time singling individuals out, the broader sports community didn't. This season, the Cougars had three staff members who were named East Bay Coach of the Year for their respective sport.

Kevin Macy, who led the Campolindo football team to the CIF Division III State title, was the first name on that list. David Chen and John Vuong, who are the co-coaches of the boys' and girls' volleyball squads, also earned the distinction. Overall, the Cougars claimed five NCS titles last year, with football, boys' volleyball, girls' water polo and both cross country programs adding to the school's trophy collection.

Miramonte also snagged five NCS titles. The list of champions for the Mats included boys' water polo, girls' basketball, girls' lacrosse, girls' soccer and the boys' doubles tennis team.

According to Dell'Aquila, the students - both past and present - play a big part in all that success.

"We rely on alumni," Dell'Aquila said, when explaining the process of hiring coaches. "We have

The Lamorinda prep sports programs have been racking up NCS banners at a furious rate, but there's no single factor that accounts for the tremendous success.

"I think we're really lucky to live in a community that strongly supports our young people," said Tom Renno, the athletic director at Campolindo. "And you kind of see that through having such strong coaches, having such strong financial support and that really allows our student-athletes to work hard and be great. And so, I think when everyone buys in - parents, coaches, athletes - then you're able to achieve special results."

According to Renno, the biggest challenge in the process of achieving those special results is finding and retaining top-tier coaches.

"We're so lucky to have so many great coaches involved with our programs and the coaches are so willing with their time," Renno said.

Vince Dell'Aquila, the athletic director and

a few alumni who are head coaches in key places and that really helps."

While acknowledging that there is plenty of pressure on coaches to deliver results on the field, Takahashi pointed out that there are also all sorts of off the field expectations.

"I think it's really important, and I know the other schools emphasize this as well - our athletes and our coaches - they represent this whole community, their families, everybody," Takahashi said. "And so, we expect the most out of them."

One of those expectations is that the students will thrive in the classroom while also winning on the field. According to Takahashi, 25 percent of the Dons' student-athletes maintained a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

"I know that for all of our coaches - winning's important don't get me wrong - winning is always important," Takahashi said. "But it's more than just winning and our coaches definitely take that to heart."



Coaches David Chen and John Vuong celebrate with the Campolindo boys' volleyball team.



Kevin Macy led the Cougars to a football state title.



Acalanes High School girls' soccer coach Evan Sassano, center, with the team.

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