

Published June 1st, 2016

Acalanes Boys Tennis Team Reaches Semifinals in NorCal State Tournament

By Karl Buscheck



Isaiah Bird Photo Gint Federas

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After back-to-back runs to the NorCal State semifinals, there's no avoiding the reality that a lot of

For the second year in a row, the Acalanes boys tennis team advanced to the semifinals of the CIF Northern California Championships. And for the second year in a row, the Dons were knocked out by the eventual champs.

"Everybody says repeating is the toughest thing in sports and to be able to have the motivation to try to improve on the unbelievable season that they had last year is great," said head coach Stephanie Lawrence. "And that's what they did."

On May 21, at the Broadstone Racquet Club in Folsom, the Dons postseason run came to an end as the boys lost to St. Ignatius - the top seed in the tournament.

Throughout the season, a deep contingent of seniors set the tone for the Dons. That group included the likes of DFAL singles champ Isaiah Bird and NCS Division I singles runner-up Kyle Everly.

"Isaiah Bird, who played No. 2, actually won the league when he beat Kyle in the finals," Lawrence said. "He had strong performances [in the playoffs]."

Lawrence also highlighted the outstanding play of Ryan Cardiff.

"I would say the iron-man most valuable [player] is Ryan Cardiff who pulled off a big victory against [James] Logan that got us to the state finals," Lawrence said. "And he almost pulled off a victory against Dougherty [Valley] when we almost beat Dougherty in the section finals."

While Bird, Everly and Cardiff dominated on the singles side, Nico Brightbill was one of the seniors who lead the way for the doubles team.

"I have to compliment him," Lawrence said of Brightbill, who played with fellow senior Conor McGlynn. "He's kind of my doubles captain. He could have played singles or doubles. They were the best doubles team. They were first team all-league. They even won both their matches at the NorCal State. They won their match against Davis and they won their match against Sr. Ignatius, who was the state champion."

talented players are departing the Dons. But the seniors have left their footprint on the program, as they prepare to move on to the collegiate rank.

Lawrence was thrilled with the team's promising future, too. "A couple of players, like Kyle, has a younger brother Ryan who's a freshman and will move up next year. Nico has a younger brother Cole who moved up in doubles," Lawrence said. "So, they were able to mentor - at least their brothers - for a year (as) seniors to freshman. And I'll have all these young brothers coming back next year who have received this valuable mentoring from the older players."

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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