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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Girls volleyball playoffs

By Jon Kingdon



Madi Risch

Photos Gint Federas

Once again it has proved to be a successful season for the Lamorinda girls volleyball teams.

Acalanes raised their record from 13-16 last season to 17-14 this year. Making the NCS playoffs, Acalanes could lay claim to the dubious distinction of having to make the longest and shortest road trips during the playoffs. Due to a fluke rule regarding Eureka High School winning a conference championship, the third seeded Dons were forced to drive 250 miles each way to play their first-round match, much to the chagrin of coach Ernie Rodriguez: "The game was scheduled to be played at 7 p.m. and they wouldn't move the game up an hour as we requested." What added to the frustration was how it was observed that "we could have beaten them with our J.V. team."

After a five-set victory over San Marin, Acalanes made the much shorter four-mile road trip to play Miramonte in the semifinals in a truly memorable match. The Dons won the first two sets (25-18, 25-13). The Dons offense has been led by Madi Risch, Kennedy Cornish and Elsa Clever. Setter Lane Webster and libero Cailey McVay both contributed with numerous digs and assists. With Miramonte winning the next two games by identical 25-23 scores, Miramonte won the final game by a 15-7 score.

Acalanes still qualified for the CIF State Championships and took another long drive to Sacramento to play Christian Brothers. Once

again, the Dons jumped out to a 2-0 lead but were unable to handle prosperity, losing their next three games (25-22, 25-22, 21-25, 18-25, 13-15).

Campolindo concluded their season with a 27-9 record. The Cougars made it to the championship game in the NCS, coming up short against Bishop O'Dowd. Still Campolindo went to the Division I state championship as the No. 3 seed. After a five-set victory over Menlo School (25-13, 20-25, 25-16, 18-25, 15-8), Campolindo was supposed to play St. Francis (Sacramento) at home. Due to the air quality or lack thereof, the game was moved to Sacramento much to the chagrin of Campolindo. The change certainly worked against the Cougars, who had a 9-1 home record this season. In close matches, there is always a home court advantage which helped St. Francis and they defeated Campolindo in five sets (25-13, 20-25, 25-16, 18-25, 15-8).

With only three seniors on the team, Vuong observed that "we're a young team. We played well to this point and we will continue to improve."

After defeating Rancho Cotate, San Francis Drake and Acalanes, Miramonte met Marin Catholic in the division III championship game going down to defeat in three games.

Miramonte (18-11) was seeded 10th in the state tournament and traveled to Mountain View for their

first match, coming up with another five-set victory (17-25, 22-25, 25-22, 25-21, 17-15).

Like Acalanes and Campolindo, Miramonte was forced to make a long road trip, traveling 133 miles to Grass Valley to take on the second seeded Nevada Union. Once again, the Matadors returned with another five-set victory over a higher seeded team (21-25, 25-21, 25-21, 23-25, 17-15). Head coach David Chao's strategy was to keep the team focused on each game: "We kept reminding the girls that every game is a new game so you don't have to be nervous."

As usual, the offense was been led by Jennifer Giron, Meaghan Hohman and Kaylyn Goode. Chao cited two sophomores on the front row that really stepped up to help the defense, Caitlin Dolorico-McPeake and Nikki Lynch. Chao particularly cited the play of Lynch: "Nikki came here with absolutely zero experience in volleyball. She came here from the Czech Republic where she was a top goalie in field hockey for the Czech team."

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