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Boys water polo teams happy to be back in the pool and competing

By Jon Kingdon



Kyle Rosenblatt, Acalanes

With so little time to prepare for the season, it's been a difficult adjustment for all the coaches. They've been forced to try and balance game preparation and technical preparation while also focusing on fundamentals. Covering all the details as to what the teams are going to do offensively, defensively, counter attacking, handling 6-on-5 and 5-on-6 situations are being handled as a work in progress.

Regardless, Miramonte head coach James Lathrop was simply glad to be back coaching. "We're grateful just to have a season," Lathrop said. "There's a sense of urgency when you have a short season that mirrors what you have at the end of your season on a normal year because we're already into the last month. We're having fun practicing and working hard together. Everyone is in the same boat and the great thing about our guys is that they're really engaged."

Miramonte has had to forgo competing against traditional, out of sections opponents like Newport and Harvard-Westlake. "In some ways this season is fun," Lathrop said. "Now it's like every game is a rivalry game and having the opportunity to get up and play a rival every time is also a really cool thing."

The Matadors graduated several talented players which has created opportunities for players to step up. "The key to this team is our depth with a huge senior class. You can't replace a Jackson Painter (now playing at Stanford) and the others but we're trying to do it collectively. We have a lot of guys that can score a goal and guard the attackers. Everyone is going to get a look."

Owen Venstreillen has replaced all-league goalie Oliver Von Karl in the net. "Owen has been on the varsity and has been a strong player and I look forward to his leading our team," Lathrop said. "He has a great attitude. He's a good communicator and has taken the lead in practice with the younger goalies as well."

Senior co-captains Adam Ting, Will Coons and Will Hollerbach were all-league last season and have taken on the leadership role as have the rest of the seniors. "Everyone has been willing to either adjust to a stronger offensive role or focus more on defense. That's what has stood out about the team to me. We do have a couple of underclassmen on varsity, and we're looking to incorporate them and just have a fun season and compete as hard as we can."

Acalanes

Taking over a team for the first time is difficult enough for a new coach. It becomes that much more difficult when you only have the shortest of preseasons to put your imprimatur on the team. Still, Acalanes head coach Lincoln Haley is not unfamiliar with water polo in Lamorinda having previously been an assistant coach at Miramonte.

Rust seems to be the operative term for the spring teams who had not played a competitive game since 2019. "We only had one scrimmage (against Miramonte) which was the first time our players got to play in over 500 days," Haley said. "You could tell that there was some rust on the players but they're fully getting back together."

Haley's philosophy is to get back to basics. "I believe in fundamentals, working from the ground up," Haley said. "Hard work is important and sometimes you just have to grind it out. If we can do that, I have confidence in our guys."

The Don's offense is led by senior co-captains, Jay Mills, who was second team all-league last year, Peter Archer and sophomore Andrew Sappall. "Jay is looking good and is really enjoying the season," Haley said. "He's a great leader and the guys really take to him. Andrew has a lot of potential that we're bringing out of him. I'm excited to see where he is going to go." Senior driver Liam Stephenson has also borne the mantle of leadership.

The defense is led by co-captain Eli Berkowitz, Haley said. "Eli is our vocal leader. He directs the other players and is a very smart player who's the guy that will remind me of things that I have forgotten to mention and keeps everybody accountable. Peter Archer and Kyle Rosenblatt have both been solid and

given us a lot of depth."

Senior goalie Parker Tompkins is the captain and the vocal leader on the defense. Sophomore Harrison Labrosse should also see some time in the goal as well.

The roster has a strong sophomore class that Haley is counting on to build for the future. "They have been doing a great job," Haley said. "They will be setting the foundation for the future and should keep getting better and better."

Haley is optimistic as to where the Dons are headed: "This is a solid group that I have a lot of confidence in. They play hard and have each other's backs. They really support each other and I've found that Acalanes is a great community to be a part of."

Campolindo

Yuri Hanley, a former Campolindo and UC Davis water polo player, is now serving as the Cougars head coach along with longtime coach Miles Price. "It's like a changing of the guard," Hanley said.

Hanley is not one to mess with the previous success of the program. "The program is pretty similar because Miles was the head coach when I was playing here," Hanley said. "We will stress hard work, teamwork, and fundamentals. I am trying to add my own spin to it with what I learned from playing at UC Davis along with what I've learned from these coaches."

Last season, Campolindo started the season off with an 8-8 record and went on to win the NCS championship. This year, Campolindo has also started slow with a 2-03 record but that is not a concern for Hanley: "I'm not worried as how we've started. It's how we finish. We're learning each day about what we can do and are trying to put it together from there."

As with Haley, Hanley was hampered by the short preseason. "It was definitely a learning experience getting thrown right into it," Hanley said. "We use the preseason for chemistry and learning about each other so we're doing everything on the fly. The players are willing to work with each other, which I have loved to see so far."

The offense is led by Brock Zamanian who has been a standout and should improve with the return of Ben Carson, who is coming off an illness. Hanley is also impressed with the junior class because "they're all excited and chomping at the bit to play."

The defense is led by perpetual all-star junior West Temkin. "West has been our anchor on the defensive end," Hanley said. "He has a high skill level and takes each game as an opportunity to get better. He is a great communicator and sets the tone defensively."

It's a combination of attitude and skill that Hanley appreciates most from the team. "Our speed and quickness allows our team to get up and down the pool better than the other teams," Hanley said. "Our players have a great mindset and they're ready to attack every day. As we continue to figure out the team's chemistry and the tendencies each player has, we will keep building on each other's strengths."



Brock Zamanian, Campolindo Photos Gint Federas

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