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Campolindo girls take DAL Championship

By Jon Kingdon



Campolindo Girls DAL Lacrosse Championship team Photo provided

After a two-year break with no postseason tournaments, the Lamorinda girls lacrosse teams all competed in the Diablo Athletic League and North Coast Section tournaments. Campolindo, whose record now stands at 15-1 dominated Northgate in the DAL final winning by a score of 20-8.

Campolindo

With the performance against Northgate in the league championship game, Campolindo went into the NCS with the No. 1 seed. It was an honor that the Cougars' head coach Devon Combe did not take lightly: "It's exciting to get the number one seed but there is also pressure to honor the respect that is put on our team, but we can honor that respect by winning the rest of our games."

The win over Northgate was a team victory in the truest sense with eight different players scoring for Campolindo led by juniors Catie McCauley with six goals and three assists, Paige Davis with three goals and four assists and senior Annie Cimperman with three goals. There were goals and assists from players from multiple grade years. "That speaks to the depth of the team and the level of the creativity and growth we have had as a program," Combe said. "It shows the way that the girls have connected on and off the field. The team was really excited to end the overall season on a strong note and to be undefeated in league which was a goal that we had set."

Cimperman was third on the team in goals scored and led the team in assists. "That bespeaks to what a complete player Annie is," Combe said. She has an incredible shot and is also a player that wants to elevate her personal game to serve the team to the best of her ability. The number of assists she has showed her space and vision."

Combe attributes the success of the team to her original class of freshman that are now seniors on this team. "They went into this season flashing back to their freshman year, their last complete season," Combe said. "They're grateful for the opportunity to have a full year experience and did not take anything for granted this year. They spread their love of the game to the underclassmen."

The defense was led by senior Laurel Hunter, who will be playing for Chapman next year and sophomore Haley Richards. "Laurel has the speed and understands the game as a defender and attacker and has been huge for us on defense," Combe said. "Haley is someone that everyone plays for and has an impact on the field. She is the total package as a goalie and makes coaching so much easier. It's not just her skills but the way that she connects with her defenders to upgrade and make adjustments in tight games."

After Combe's first year as the Campolindo head coach, the Cougars finished the season with a 7-12 record were ranked 1,271 nationally by MaxPreps. Now in her fourth year, the Cougars made an Everest like jump to now being ranked 85th nationally.

In Campolindo's first two games in the NCS tournament, they shut out San Rafael 21-0 and outscored University 17-4.

Miramonte

In what was seen as a rebuilding year for Miramonte, head coach Jackie Pelletier saw the team begin the season with only three wins in their first 12 games. The Matadors closed out the regular season winning four of their last seven games, losing to Campolindo 16-10 in the DAL semifinals and to third seeded Tamalpais in the NCS by a score of 18-8.

Playing Campolindo close and making the NCS were important to Pelletier in showing how far the team had come. "I was really impressed at how far we came after starting the season with only six returning starters and finishing out the season really strong," Pelletier said. "We checked all the boxes and improved as the season went on. We overcame a lot of injuries and adversity and to finish on such a higher note than where we started was really great for me and the team."

Pelletier was particularly pleased for four-year co-captains, Elena Gant and Ellie Hawkins, in that they were able to compete in the postseason. "Even though it was a short postseason, they were thrilled to be able to enter the NCS tournament, something they hadn't done since they were freshmen," Pelletier said.

With such a young team, Miramonte had to use more freshmen than anticipated. "We found ourselves without a lot of defenders, so we put two freshmen, Grace Wood and Ashlynn Browning, in starting roles on defense which is the first time we've done that in a number of years," Pelletier said. "I was impressed with how they played along with the other freshmen on the team, against some of the top teams in the region."

Freshman goalie Isobel Starkey stepped in when called upon and showed great potential for the future. "Izzy's attitude was just the most impressive thing," Pelletier said. "She showed up every day wanting to learn more and do better, constantly asking questions. I'm excited to see what her next three years bring."

With a strong core of juniors returning, led by Taryn Pearce, Lindsay French and Kate Difranco, taking on the leadership role and upcoming players from the JV team, Pelletier is very optimistic about the future of the team: "With 14 returners from the varsity and a JV team that had 24 players, some of whom we brought up for the NCS game, we're back to feeding the program. We will also have a number of freshmen coming up from our youth program next year. I look forward to coming back next year with a full team and program with a lot of kids excited to play."

Acalanes

This was a difficult year for the Acalanes Dons, but head coach Bill Fraser had nothing but respect for how the team responded. "The resilience of these young women after the last 26 months has been remarkable," Fraser said. "It's been wonderful to have a team that was so close, particularly when they were tested so severely."

Fraser pointed to the way the 15th seeded Dons competed against the second seeded Marin Academy in the NCS tournament, losing by a score of 15-7. "We received a poor seeding which did not reflect the strength of our schedule," Fraser said. "With 15 minutes left in the game, we were only down 8-6. The girls played their hearts out and after the last three and a half weeks of the season, they were mentally and physically exhausted on the bus ride home."

Yet that is not what Fraser will remember most about that day: "We took them out for cheeseburgers, and they were laughing and smiling, and they were kids. That reflects what I wanted to say about this season. I've never seen a team that was closer and cared more about each other and that sums up our season."

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

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