

# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## New coaches lead Lamorinda boys' water polo teams



Photo Bill Gerhardt

**Acalanes Goalie Harrison Labrosse, Defender #7 Thomas Parrot, Miramonte shooter #23 Charlie Engs**

**By Jon Kingdon**

It's been a transition for the Lamorinda boys' water polo teams with new head coaches for each school. However, it's more so for Acalanes coach Nicholas Johnson, who after coaching a number of club teams, is making his initial appearance with the Dons. Campolindo co-head coaches, Darren Schroeder and Yuri Henley, though it is their first year coaching the varsity, have been coaching the Cougars JV team for a number of years. The Miramonte co-head coaches are John Nash, a 2009 Miramonte graduate and former varsity assistant coach, and Lincoln Haley, a 2008 Miramonte graduate who also coached at Miramonte for a number of years and was the head coach at Acalanes the past two years.

### Miramonte

After a 16-11 record and making it to the NorCal championship game, Nash and Haley did not have to start from scratch in replacing longtime head coach James Lathrop, now coaching at Stanford. "We're not trying to be James, but we have a very similar system," Nash said. "Obviously, James left us a phenomenal foundation and system that the guys have bought into for years so we're rolling with that. We have five really great coaches who are cohesive and work together while being our own authentic selves. It really is a team effort."

With a 9-2 record and 3-0 in league, there has been a carryover from the success of last year's team. "We've got a bunch of competitors and a really balanced group of guys that want to compete day in and day out and that's made for some great practices. We have a lot of guys challenging for minutes so that has made things more competitive, which is great. We're still finding our identity but we're excited and looking to put ourselves in the best position, come the playoffs in November."

With 18 juniors and seniors and six sophomores and freshmen on the roster, there is no shortage of experience for the Matadors. "We have a great mix on our roster," Nash said. "Our underclassmen are dynamic, and they have raised the level of our practices and competition. It's been fun to watch them learn from the older players who really want to help them. That's what we have been trying to create as part of our culture and the older guys have really bought into it as the players before them did as well."

The co-captains are Matteo Petty, Luke Lewis, and Charlie Engs. "They've done a great job but honestly our entire senior class has taken on the ownership of being leaders," Nash said.

It's a group effort for the Miramonte offense led by seniors Charlie Engs and Brian Edelen, juniors Henry Engs, Grant Kurtz, and Oliver Sherwood. "We're a really balanced group which we hope makes it more difficult for us to game plan against," Nash said.

There are three freshmen who are getting a lot of playing time. Brock Bliss and Jackson Cherry have played in every game and Tristan Tucker has also seen substantial playing time. "They're helping us as we try to play 12-13 guys every game so they're creating depth which puts us in position in the second half where the team is a little more rested."

Sophomore Griff Tunney, a left-handed attacker has been the setup man on the team's offense. "Griff has made huge strides and has been a game changer for us, opening things up for our offense," Nash said. "We're really excited about his improvement."

Seniors Addison Owensby and Logan Haines have both been effective in the net. "Addison has done a phenomenal job after working his butt off the last three years, waiting for his opportunity," Nash said. "He's really come out and taken it and we could not be happier

about how he's improved and when called upon, Logan has also done well."

Nash counts on team defense but acknowledges that center defender Matteo Petty has been a key factor in their success. "Matteo has done a nice job controlling the center for us but really everything is about the team and the team is first," Nash said.

The staff is pointing to improvement on defense as the season progresses. "We want to be one of the best defensive teams in Northern California," Nash said. "That's the goal we set out for in the beginning of the year, because defense translates to the playoffs."

### Campolindo

For Schroeder and Henley, it's a simple plan for the Cougars. "The goal is always the same - to be competitive in the league and North Coast," Henley said. "That's what our goals are."

The team has a somewhat deceptive 4-7 record, having lost a number of close games. Though this is a team with nine seniors and seven juniors, it's still a team learning to play together. "We have a number of upperclassmen, but they've not had the quality playing time in meaningful games in the past," Henley said. "They're learning a lot and we're getting better every game but there is a big difference in the experience level this team has, as opposed to previous years."

Schroeder has no complaints with the character and quality of his players. "This is an amazingly competitive team," Schroeder said. "They swim well, and we have no issues with fitness counters or toughness. They're gaining playing experience as we put our schemes into place. We've been close in every game. We just have to start getting more wins."

After four years of the superlative West Temkin in the net, junior Joey Cecchin has stepped in and seen little dropoff. "Joey played JV last year and has been a very good goalie," Schroeder said. "We've had years of very good goalies and we're lucky with it again this year."

Leading the offense has been seniors Grant Roeshe, Reid Thorson, and sophomore Hayden O'Hare.

It's more design than individual play for the Campolindo defense. "Our defense is more of a scheme than having defensive specialists," Schroeder said. "I call it a simple, water polo help defense."

In anticipation of the team graduating 10 seniors last year, Schroeder and Henley anticipated last year's JV team to be a strong factor this year. "We developed JV last year knowing that several of those guys would be contributing this season, so we always had our eye on having the sophomores play and we developed four of them to be in that role. We have a very strong JV team this year as well and we anticipate that next year we could have as many as six of those guys contributing."

Still, the focus remains on finishing strong this year. "The key going into league is defending to counterattack better and finishing goals quicker," Henley concluded.

### Acalanes

For Johnson, his philosophy as a coach is to stress team unity. "It's definitely team first," Johnson said. "We've all got to be working together and be on the same page in and out of the pool and if we can do that, we're going to be a stronger team that way. We want to emphasize each player's own unique individual talents and make them shine within our team system."

With eight seniors, two juniors, two sophomores and one freshman, it's a matter of the various classes coming together. "We have various talent levels, but everyone is learning and getting better together," Johnson said. "If we do those things, that's how we're going to win our games."

Despite a 3-8 record, four of the losses have been by a combined nine goals. "Every loss is always tough, but we've always tried to focus on what we did well and then what we need to work on," Johnson said. "We take pride in our defense and we're trying to limit teams to as few goals as possible because it will always put us in a good position to win the game."

The offense has been led by seniors Christian Gotterup, Andrew Sappal, Austin Bishop, and Miguel Strittmatter and there is good depth in this area. "There are a number of players that make sure that we get the ball to those guys," Johnson said. "Sophomore Justin Rosenblatt and freshman Thomas Parrot have been doing a great job in stepping up into important roles and giving us good minutes offensively and defensively."

The Dons offense is based on design more than individual play. "We see our offense as schemes," Johnson said. "We're trying to read the defense and that can dictate what we do."

Senior Harrison Labrosse has been very solid in goal. "Harrison is just playing lights out for us and he's on track to do great things," Johnson said. "He's a big person and his movements in goal are great. He slides well and covers shots that are not always his to block. It's good to have his talent and leadership coming from the goal because it's helped us in a lot of games."

As the team heads into league play, Johnson is looking forward to the team continuing to come together. "On defense, we just need to keep tightening up those parts of our game, trying to limit our opponents scoring which increases our chances of winning," Johnson said. "On offense, it's just a matter of continuing to work for each other. With a lot of driving, that will open things up. Working together as a team, that's what is going to help us become a team, not just individual players."

## Lamorinda girls' water polo continues its long-running domination

**By Jon Kingdon**

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said, "What doesn't kill us, makes us stronger."

He could have been talking about the Lamorinda girls' water polo teams who, year in and year out, have been essentially competing against each other in the highly ranked Diablo Ath-

letic League and this year has been no different.

Since 2013, there has been a consistent domination by the Lamorinda girls' water polo teams. Acalanes (161-60), Campolindo (159-62) and Miramonte (187-40) have a composite 507-162 record for a 76% winning percentage. Throw in four undefeated complete seasons and various NCS and NorCal championships and it's a tri-

umvirate that will compare favorably with any set of teams.

This season has proven to be no different as noted by MaxPreps in their rankings. The North Coast Section rankings are Miramonte-1, Acalanes-2, Campolindo-3. The California rankings are Miramonte-1, Acalanes-3, and Campolindo-4 and nationally it is Miramonte-1, Acalanes-4, and Campolindo-5.

### Miramonte

Coming into this season, Miramonte had won 39 straight games and are 14-0 so far this season. With nine seniors, several of whom will be playing for Division I colleges next year, the Matadors have outscored their opponents 226-69. "We're doing well," second year head coach John Roemer said ... continued on Page C2

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