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Lamorinda softball teams overcome rainouts and unplayable fields

By Jon Kingdon



Haley Stripling batting Photo Jon Kingdon

As the softball teams are beginning their league games, it has been a hit or miss proposition in being able to play their games prior to spring break. Acalanes has been able to play eight games, Miramonte nine games and Campolindo has only been able to play four games due to rainouts and unplayable fields with the hope that these games can be rescheduled.

Acalanes

Head coach Victor Silva has seen some big wins and tough losses for the 4-4 Acalanes team with only one bad loss to Benicia. "Every game we've been in has been a real nail biter," Silva said. "Our big issue is that we have been making too many errors and that is just so frustrating."

Even more frustrating for Silva was a 10-inning loss to Las Lomas. "I'm really happy with my team though you're only really as happy as your last game," Silva said. "After our 10-inning loss to Las Lomas, their coach called me and said that might have been the most exciting game he'd ever been involved in and I was really happy to hear that, but it was a tough loss," Silva said.

After winning their first three games, the Dons suffered a big loss when first baseman Tess Gundacker, who bats fourth, suffered a knee injury. "We got off to a very good

start and then we lost Tess and hopefully she'll be back in a few weeks," Silva said. "When she was healthy, she was very clutch for us. After she got hurt, everything went downhill. We just have to be patient as she goes through rehab."

The pitching staff is led by freshman Maya Shoenhair (2.74 ERA) and junior Lana Cerejo (4.2 ERA) along with junior Nicole Parlett (3.5 ERA), who has also seen time on the mound. "Maya has been fantastic which you don't expect from a freshman," Silva said. "She has great control and is starting to mix up her pitches because the batters are always looking for strikes and she is still a freshman going against seniors. Lana is a good complement to Maya and I've been switching them after they go through the order twice so the hitters don't get a feel for each pitcher and this strategy has been working well."

The leading batters for Acalanes have been Emme Young (.600), Haley Stripling (.591), Esa Orman (.407), and Shoenhair (who also plays first base .350). "Haley (who will be playing for Rutgers next year) has been the rock of the team at bat and in the field at shortstop," Silva said. "Esa has been very solid behind the plate and Emme catches everything lining up in centerfield. (Seniors) Emi Cronin and Sophia Alvarado have done fine defensively and freshman Lauren Foster has done well in the outfield and at second base."

Silva is very pleased with the attitude of the team: "After the 10th inning loss to Las Lomas and then a tough loss to Pinole Valley, the top team in our league, I asked the girls if they wanted to practice on Saturday and they all said yes. We're going to get better in that we have such a young team."

Miramonte

For first year head coach O.C. Schott, it's been a matter of building from the bottom up through their nine games. "We have a very hard-working group that is striving for excellence," Schott said. "That's been our motto. We believe that we can do great things and it's measured in various ways. It's not always with wins, but it's with looking to continue to improve throughout."

The team has a good mixture of experience and youth with eight seniors, two juniors, three sophomores and two freshmen and is led by four captains, seniors Sarah Michels, Izzy Roy, Maya Paykel and junior Antonia Lawrence.

"Sarah has been our top hitter and has been great at shortstop, along with taking up pitching, though she had never pitched before," Schott said. "Antonia has done a great job at first base. Aubrie Jalowiec has

made a lot of plays for us at shortstop in her first year of playing softball. Pateel Horoupian has stepped in as our catcher because we need to use Izzy at first and second base. Julia Quinn-Ferguson has also done well in centerfield."

The Matadors' defense has been playing more consistently with each game: "I've seen the improvement on the defensive side," Schott said. "We're getting more outs in the games, rather than the step offs and we've been able to have games where we're recording true outs in every inning and that's been the biggest thing. We've been able to play full games and that's been the biggest thing."

For Schott, this is just the first step in the growth of the team's program: "We have 14 players on the team this year so our first goal is to grow the varsity first, and then over a course of a few years, maybe get a JV team. To help grow the numbers, we want to create an environment where the players want to come out for the team. This group is at the beginning of that, because their approach has been to play for each other, play for the team, and represent the school, and no matter the score, they just keep playing."

Campolindo

Due to the weather, the Cougars have been particularly limited in the number of games they've been able to play. "We only played four games so far and in one of those games, our main pitcher Lyla Marcus was out sick," Head coach Saul Tallarico said. "We have a great attitude on the team. We're primarily a young team (12 sophomores, 4 freshman) and a group of seniors with good leadership qualities so we're hoping to come back after spring break to get some sun and hit the ground running."

The rain has also limited the team's early season preparation. "Due to the weather, we've had to practice in the small gym for the first time in four years," Tallarico said. "There are only so many drills you can do inside for a softball team."

The leading batters are Keilly Kilpatrick (.600), senior Lyla Marcus (.571), freshman Cassidy Mintz (.444), senior Ashlyn Chin (.400) and sophomore Clara Hwang (.333). Kilpatrick, Marcus, Chin and senior Molly Strohmeyer are the team's co-captains.

"The top of our order has been the strength of the offense," Tallarico said. "Keilly is a strong leader and has started the season well at the plate. Clara is one of our most consistent hitters who lines up at first in the outfield and can also pitch. Lyla has been a force on the mound and as a batter. Cassidy has a strong bat and plays third base and in the outfield. Ashlyn has taken over at shortstop and has done a nice job in the field and at bat. Strohmeyer has been a defensive force in centerfield and freshman Peyton Tallarico has fielded well in right field. Sophomore Lucy Wilson has done a great job behind the plate."

Junior first baseman Kylie Dowdall has been out with an ankle injury. "We miss her bat and her play at first base," Tallarico said. "We're hoping to have her back in time for league play."

With the return of Dowdall and Kilpatrick, Tallarico is confident that having a consistent lineup will be a key to the team's success as league play begins: "Just to be able to get a consistent lineup will help to bolster us. Our attitude is strong, and their spirits are high. Our players see all the games coming up on the schedule, especially our league games and they are looking forward to competing, especially against our rival schools and getting in to the win column."

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