

Published May 10th, 2023

All six Lamorinda lacrosse teams make it to the NCS tournament

By Jon Kingdon



Acalanes 7 Ella Thomason, Campolindo 30 Catie McCauley Photo Allison Curletto

Coming into the DAL championship game against Campolindo, Acalanes head coach Bill Frazier knew that the girls' lacrosse team had their hands full against the top seeded Cougars. "We've had a solid team all year, but we tend to make just enough mistakes that can make it challenging to beat a top team like Campolindo."

It was too much of a team effort by Campolindo for Acalanes to overcome with the Cougars coming out on top 16-8. "We were able to move the ball well in transition after winning off the draw," Campolindo head coach Devin Combe said. "We saw our players in the field and were able to finish it with our shots. Our defense played strong as a unit, communicating well. We were able to get all of our players into the game and everybody contributed, and it was good to get Molly Stephens back in full health after having suffered a concussion earlier in the season."

Campolindo

After starting off the season losing two of their first three games, the Cougars quickly got back on track to win 11 of their next 12 games. For head coach Devin Combe, it was a matter of challenging the team to compete against top opponents: "Our two losses were against Tamalpais, the number one ranked team in Division II and Carondelet, a dominating team in Division I."

The team has been led by senior co-captains Catie McCauley and Paige Davis, both of whom will be playing for UC Davis next year, joining Annie Cimperman from last year's team.

McCauley has had 68 goals on 75% of her shots with 24 assists and Davis has 52 goals on 80% of her shots with 30 assists. "We've had very dominating performances from the two of them these past two years," Combe said. "They have both been very good at seeing and involving their teammates. If the team is not scoring well, Catie will go to the cage if the team needs goals. Paige makes it a point to help her teammates and we will need to remind her that she can score as well."

Combe appreciates that the team could not be as successful as they have been if they had only two players to rely on. Senior Bridgette Lane (35 goals & 26 assists) and junior Molly Stephens (12 goals & 12 assists) have also had top seasons. "Bridgette and Molly among others have been key ingredients to the team's success because it's exhausting if you have to rely on only two players," Combe said.

The Cougars are averaging 15.4 goals per game, scoring on 72% of their shots and Combs attributes their high shooting percentage to the talents of their goalie, junior Haley Richards. "When you have a good goalie in the cage in practice, our players know they have to shoot better and as a rule, they have found most of their opposing goalies to be not as intimidating as shooting against Haley every day in practice," Combe said.

Richards, who has been dominant since her freshman year, has stopped 57.4% of the shots on goal and Combe still sees room for improvement in her play: "Haley's feet have gotten faster, and she has been working a lot on her range. The biggest overall factor has been her mental preparation for games, getting to a place where she can take ownership but not feel the entire weight of a win or loss solely on her back, which will be huge."

Contributing to the success of Richards has been the play of the defense in front of her, led by seniors Ava Martinez, Katie Duff, and junior Sadie Geenty. "Our defense has shown the biggest growth for us," Combe said. "Ava, Katie, and Sadie Geenty have been the anchors on the defense. They've provided a calming stability as well as consistency with controlling the ball."

Combe's respect for the players in Lamorinda are only matched by her respect for her fellow coaches: "Because our programs know that the Campolindo, Acalanes and Miramonte schools are all so close, I appreciate the level of respect and friendship that the Lamorinda coaches have for each other. We're all competitive yet we want each other to succeed and there's just a mutual respect for each other."

The No. 3 seeded Cougars defeated Napa (16-8) and Justin-Siena (17-6) in the first two rounds of the NCS

and were scheduled to play at Marin Academy in the semifinals on May 9, after press time.

Acalanes

After a 7-11 season last year, head coach Bill Frazier's team showed a major improvement, finishing the season with a 13-6 record which Frazier credits to the maturity of the team: "Our returning seniors were very important to the team's success, in particular, our three midfielders, co-captains seniors Haley Rurka, Maya Wang and junior Grace Imrie.

"The leadership really flows from Haley who's been playing since the second grade. Her teammates have a great respect and love for her as they do for Maya, who really blossomed in her second year on the varsity and will be playing at Smith College next year. Grace has been a real rock for the team, leading by example and you can see that she puts in the time and should be a great leader next year as a senior."

There is only one sophomore on the team, Megan Churchill, who was the only freshman on the team last year. "Megan is a great kid who plays attack," Frazier said. "She has good size and strength and is a very skilled scorer who played a lot these past two years."

Junior goalie Addie Martin has been a force in goal. "Addie is very steady and consistent and should make the all-league team this year," Frazier said. "She has worked relentlessly since the eighth grade when (JV coach) Steve Siler and I asked her if she would be interested in trying to play goalie. She's completely unafraid and works very hard and understands of the position, the angles, and the kinds of shots she's going to get."

Leading the defense are two juniors, Avery Ives and Kelly Todhunter. "Avery is not that tall but is a bulldog with a lot of confidence and is very fast," Frazier said. "Kelly, who is also fast, was a two-sport athlete. As a former basketball player, she is extremely skilled with her footwork and knows how to position herself and is getting more and more confident."

The Dons won their opening game in the NCS over Head Royce 9-8 with Grace Imrie scoring the winning goal in overtime off a penalty shot and lost to the second seeded Marin Academy 13-3 in the quarterfinals.

Frazier is already looking forward to next year with 10 juniors returning. "There's really good leadership and chemistry on this team," Frazier said. "We have 70 girls in our program so it's going to be a really competitive situation next year."

Miramonte

Miramonte also had a big turnaround this year. After going 7-12 in 2022, the Matadors finished the season with a 10-7 record, going 7-1 in league play after opening the season with a 2-4 record. "We started our season with only five players that had more than one year's experience which was hard at the start," head coach Jackie Pelletier said. "This was the smallest return in a two-year term ever in my time. It was a matter of getting everyone to work together."

Pelletier did that with the team's early season schedule. "We scheduled a lot of tough opponents to make us better, so even though we didn't win many of the games at the start, it made us a better team," Pelletier said.

It's been a senior, co-captain Kate Difrancio, and a freshman, Sawyer Bohlig, who have been leading the offense. "Kate's been an amazing player all these years and is the leading goal scorer in the DAL, even though she is a selfless player, putting the team before herself," Pelletier said. "She plays with a big heart and had to take on a large responsibility for the offense, executing it wonderfully. Her ability to catch passes inside the eight just makes her unstoppable."

Bohlig is the younger sister of Emerson Bohlig who is now playing at Northwestern University. "Sawyer has been among the leaders in the league in goals and assists," Pelletier said. "She has a 60/40 split on goals to assists which is a testament to what a true team player she is. She is lightning fast and has beautiful stickwork and I expect her to continue to do great things. Our other captains, Lindsey French and Taryn Pearce, have been a part of our success, playing with the team since their freshman year. Taryn's sister, McKenzie, a freshman, has also stepped up for us this year as a starter."

Sophomore Isabelle Starkey, in only her second year playing goalie, has shown great improvement. "Izzy is committed to the position and puts in the work and has been improving every day," Pelletier said. "She is fearless and a real competitor, always asking for teammates to shoot at her after practice. She has become a vocal leader, loudly quarterbacking the defense. Freshman Elsa Schroeder has also seen time in the goal and shows the same passion as Izzy."

Sophomores Grace Wood and Ashlyn Browning and senior Sienna Esopa have been the anchor on the team's defense. "All three play really well and it's good to have Grace and Ashlyn returning, paving the way for our newer players," Pelletier said.

Miramonte won their opening NCS game, avenging an early season loss to Bishop O'Dowd 16-14 and lost to the top seeded team Tamalpais 18-7.

With every Lamorinda lacrosse team making the NCS tournament, Pelletier gives much of the credit to Dave Defranco, Kate's father: "Dave ran the Lamorinda Youth Program for years, when most of the current players were young, starting the program and bolstering the lacrosse community. Without Dave, I don't think that the Lamorinda senior and junior classes would be as strong as they are now for the boys and girls. He is well known and loved by all of the top players."



Campolindo girls Lacrosse team Photo Allison Curletto



#30 Catie McCauley. #24 Grace Imrie Photo Allison Curletto

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA