

Dons boys defeat Cougars in DAL



Photo Will Lovitt

#8 Acalanes Marshall Anderson, #17 Jack Alcalay, Goalie Dante Avicolli

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Acalanes won their first two games in the NCS defeating Terra Linda 17-2 and Northgate 14-8.

Miramonte

Replacing longtime head coach Byron McGovern, Joe Azevedo has been close with the team over the years, so his philosophy was to carry on with what has made the team successful.

"It's about these guys coming out and playing Miramonte lacrosse and identifying what that was and sticking to our game plan," Azevedo said. "The plan is based on fundamentals with the players moving the ball and their feet, working together and communicating, doing the things that are standard in most sports and when we've done that, we've played well, and we've been able to match up with anyone and qualifying for the NCS tournament."

Azevedo knew he was getting into, playing in such a competitive league. "Absolutely. We've been playing competitive games against our crosstown rivals in Campolindo and Acalanes," Azevedo said "We've played a lot of solid games and I think that says a lot for the lacrosse in this area and a nod to the local club teams that feed the high schools."

Miramonte lost a number of players to graduations and a whole new group of players took things over. "We were pleasantly surprised this year when we had a new crop of players come out," Azevedo said. "The team has been hardworking and focused. Our challenge was to figure out our identity. They've come to realize that wins don't just happen and it's nice to be in this position."

There has been a strong core of leadership with five senior captains, Jack Spencer, Chase Bliss, Matthew Hawkins, Jake Disston and Jonah Azevedo. The offense, defense and midfield are all represented within this group. "They cover both ends of the field," Azevedo said. "They're all strong guys of character, good role models and they've managed to get the team on the same page that's been our goal from the start."

Azevedo analogizes his offense to basketball: "There's a role for everyone to play," Azevedo said. "It comes down to possessions, with every player picking up a ground ball and getting us that possession which gives us another chance on offense."

Azevedo likes to use his defense to get the offense started: "We try and keep things pretty simple on defense - we make the stop and then push and transition to offense because we've got the athletic guys to fast break and get the ball on the offensive side to give our attackers the opportunity to score."

The defense is led by Spencer, Hayden Westover, Nick Blair, and Grant Saanlon. "Jack locks us down there, and they've all contributed, and we've been

able to take advantage of their athleticism," Azevedo said. Junior Rhys Hire brought a soccer background and athleticism into the goal. "I'll take an athletic goalie anytime and he helps us get the ball up field," Azevedo said. Approaching the NCS, Azevedo, returns to basics: "We have to bring it all together. There are no magic bullets here. It's a matter of playing hard and together for four quarters."

Miramonte defeated St. Mary's (Stockton) 20-7 and lost in the quarterfinal game to Piedmont 12-6.

Campolindo

After starting off the season with a 2-3 record, Campolindo hit their stride winning nine of their last 11 games. "We didn't play well in a couple of early games, but we got better every week," Coach Knightly said. "The start of the lacrosse season is so early and can be chaotic because a number of times we don't know what field we will be on, sharing the field with the soccer team whose season carried over with their playoffs and with all of the rain, we missed out on a lot of practices."

Campolindo averaged 12.8 goals on offense that had a number of scorers led by Harrison Leenhouts who will be playing for Colby next year, Patrick Sebree, Evan Louis, DecHenn Anderson, and Holden Coakley all contributing to the team's success.

"We're really going to miss Harrison. He has over 70 goals this season and may be one of the best players to have come out of Campolindo and certainly the best player I've coached over the last 15 years," Knightly explained. "Patrick is a textbook lacrosse player that is a leader on the field and by example. He does everything right which increases his scoring, his ground balls, and his passing percentages. Evan, a senior captain, only began playing as a freshman and has been a glue guy that can play both offense and defense."

"Declan, a midfielder, may be our most improved player only starting to play lacrosse last year," Knightly added. "He's made a major transformation from being a new player to someone that we came to depend on to do well. Holden is an attacker that always seems to come up with the key goals that are so meaningful."

The defense is led by two sophomores, Griffin Tetz and Boden Rasmussen. "Griffin does a lot for us," Knightly said. "He is a great dual sport athlete. Boden has started every game the past two years. He gets a lot of hard matchups and dodges really well and is hard to guard."

Dante Avicolli is a junior that really settled down as the year progressed having given up 66 goals in the first five games and only 83 goals in the next 11 games. "Dante helps me sleep at night knowing that I have a keeper who can really save the ball," Knightly said. "He should be able to play at the next level. He improved his poise in the clear game with his outlet passes and his communication skills makes him a rock-solid foundation of the defensive unit."

Knightly did not get down after the loss in the DAL championship. "It was a great atmosphere playing against Acalanes," Knightly said. "Every year we want to compete for the NCS championship."

Campolindo won their opening game in the NCS against Livermore 10-5 and lost in the next round to Justin-Siena 9-6.

Campo girls defeat Acalanes in DAL Championship



Photo Allison Curletto

#30 Catie McCauley. #24 Grace Imrie

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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 Difranc, 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 lighting 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."

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