

# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Nationally ranked women's water polo teams pointing to post-season

By Jon Kingdon



Malin Stone scoring a goal

Photos Kamber Briones



Acalanes goalie Adelyn Horciza making a save



Sara Williams lining up her shot

The competition for the Lamorinda girls' water polo teams is no longer just between themselves. Between them, they have played a number of nationally ranked teams 1-Sacred Heart Prep, 4-Arroyo Grande, 13-Carondolet, Leland-14, 15-Tamalpais, 17-Soquel, and 25-Clovis with Campolindo, Acalanes, and Miramonte ranked 2, 6 and 10, respectively.

"With so many competitive teams, it's great for our sport and our area," Campolindo Head Coach Kim Everist said.

### CAMPOLINDO

Campolindo has started off strongly, winning 11 of their first 14 games, with two of the losses coming against Sacred Heart Prep and Arroyo Grande

The Cougars have had big wins over Clovis and Tamalpais but took particular satisfaction over breaking a long losing streak to Miramonte with a 9-4 win in their third game of the season.

"The girls played a great game," Head Coach Kim Everist said. "We didn't jump into the pool, but it was satisfying. We have been carrying that weight for a while, so it was good to break that streak and since it was at the Acalanes tournament, it immediately became a non-conversation for us and received a lot of congratulations from all over." Campolindo has since extended their streak over Miramonte to two.

With only four seniors but nine juniors, Everist had to make some adjustments. "We

lost some key players from last year," she said. "A number of our players are doing a lot of different things, but this team is very adaptable with different centers so it's hard for teams to figure out who our scorers are going to be and that gives us an edge. The team has a great work ethic and will do whatever it takes to have a really successful season."

Everist is looking for total team involvement: "Everyone is going to be involved and it's going to take all seven people in the pool to make great things happen, and that is going to help us as we go through the season because you can't just isolate one or two of our players."

Sophomore Lily Holway is leading the team in goals and steals, and is second in assists. "Lily is fast as lightning and has embraced her role as our sprinter," Everist said. "She is a tremendous counterattack player with a good sense of the game and can make passes across the goal. She wants to do big things and has stepped into that role."

Senior Nikki Frazier plays on the 4-5 side and is leading the team in assists. "Nikki is able to read the game and is a great passer," Everist said. "It's going to take everybody to want to be a scorer and want to play really good defense and they've shown that they're up for the challenge."

Campolindo is using a press defense and is led by center/defender

Ainsley Hogan, who along with Ella Binney, Avery Sullivan, and freshman Louise Walls, all have double figures in steals. So far, our steals (101), as a team have been greater than our turnovers and that's a positive stat for us."

Last year's DAL outstanding goalie junior Sydney Kring is still a major force in the goal and has a very effective backup in junior Addie Wen. "We're very strong in the goal with Sidney and Addy," Everist said. "Addy had a great year in club and summer and she and Sydney have split time fairly equally, and we're making it work" Everist said. "To ultimately be successful, we have to keep working on both ends of the pool and tightening up our defense, and we have to take advantage of our counterattacks," Everist added.

### ACALANES

With a roster with as many freshmen as they have seniors – four -- the Acalanes roster is well represented with each high school class and has a 11-2 won-loss record to go along with it.

The team is led by junior Ella Del Rosario, who was first team all-league and is leading the team in goals (55), assists (17), steals (26) and shooting percentage (63.8).

"Ella's motor is unbelievable," said Head Coach Misha Buchel. "She knows that she is going to be double and triple teamed and does not get frustrated when she is not getting the ball because she knows that

she is doing good work for her teammates and has evolved in that way. She is also aggressive on defense with great instincts which is why she has so many steals."

Sophomore Finley Graff played a lot last season and is the team's second leading scorer. "Finley is fantastic offensively and we've used her in defensive matchups because she has really grown in her understanding of how to play on the defensive side," Buchel said.

Junior Olivia Whipple has been very effective as the team's center defender. "Olivia is someone that is effective using her quickness and agility," Buchel stated.

There is particularly good depth in the net. Sophomore Adelyn Horciza, who was second team all-league last year, has improved her game in all areas. "Adelyn has great intelligence and ability," Buchel said. "She is aggressive and will get her share of steals and is looking to get the ball down the end of the pool." Horciza already has four assists this season.

Levand Koopah is the only senior among the team's first seven scorers. "Levand loves to score and does a good job in setting herself up and gets out on the counterattack, along with being a great leader on the team," praised Buchel.

With such a young team, Buchel made it a point to back end the Don's schedule to allow the team to mature through the start of the

season though playing the highly ranked Sacred Heart Prep. The game showed the team that there was certainly room for improvement, but they are still capable of playing head-to-head with any of their opponents.

### MIRAMONTE

It's been an uncharacteristically slow start for Miramonte with a ten and five record, though the five losses have come the teams ranked 1-2-4 in the nation: Sacred Heart Prep, Campolindo (2), and Arroyo Grande (2).

"We are starting to turn it around but it takes time to get our players back on board in how we play, and we have to get better every day individually and as a team," said Head Coach John Roemer. "It's super challenging with all of the top competition. They're playing hard but I told them that we need to play better."

This is an experienced team with eight starting seniors but brings a great deal of depth and experience with the underclassmen getting their share of playing time.

The offense is led by Aly Larsen (25 goals) who is headed to UCLA, Audrina King (10 goals, 11 assists), going to Indiana, left-handed Allison Sagara, leading the team with 29 assists, also headed to UCLA, Bea Hearey, (23 goals) and Marta Maninetti (18 goals 8 assists).

"Audrina is our best five-meter shooter and has a high-water polo IQ," Roemer said. "Allion

is who we go through, and she calls out things. Bea is a good driver, super smart, gets high on her legs, is fast and makes everything go. And Marta is super aggressive on the counter and in guarding as a perimeter defender and gets her steals."

Sophomores Grayson Menard, Bella Beaver, Ilinca Gaitanaru, Hannah Gardner, and freshman Jemimah Hearey will all be getting playing time this year as well. Roemer also made it a point to acknowledge the play of junior Kate Liu: "Kate is our most improved player from last season. She gets up on her legs and is really accurate and really wants to be good. She just needs to still work on her defense."

Seniors Eliana Botene and Charlee Spence have good experience in the goal, and sophomore Avery Schilling was just brought up from the J.V. and is providing good depth.

"We've gotten into good shape and we're using a nine-person rotation this year," Roemer said. "We have a very good JV team that played in a tournament separately from our varsity and we both made it to the final game, but we opted to let two other teams play in our stead."

The team is still improving; when asked when he anticipates it reaching its potential, Roemer said "I see it happening at the end of the season though we may lose some games as we continue to improve."

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