

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Boys water polo teams pointing to the playoffs

By Jon Kingdon



Campolindo's Hayden O'Hare



Campolindo goalie Drew DeFrancisci

CAMPOLINDO

For Brodie Jasper, in his first year as the Cougars head coach, there was little need for a honeymoon period, having previously played at Campolindo (class of 1997), and having been an assistant coach at Campolindo (2012-2014), Acalanes, and Monte Vista. He has also coached with the USA Water Polo Olympic Development Program and is currently in his second year on the National Team staff.

Jasper has taken last year's 17-12 team to its current 14-7 record.

"I've brought a different approach to the team, stressing discipline, taking accountability and responsibility as young adults that we're trying to shape them into, and instilling a certain type of work ethic," Jasper said. "They will see that if they abide by those ideals, good things are going to happen, and we are seeing positive results."

The Cougars are averaging 14 goals per game. "I definitely like to run through a traditional center, and a lot of weak side movement, and driving," Jasper said. "With a good center, you end up going up against a lot of zones, so we have been working hard on our perimeter movement, moving into open pockets, and creating shooting lanes, moving the ball quickly to beat the defenses."

The offense has been led by lefty Hayden O'Hara and sophomore attackers Ellis Culleton, Will Maguy, and

Cade O'Hare, who were all second team all-league last season. "Hayden really helps to institute our offense and when teams focus on him, he becomes a facilitator," Jasper said.

Senior Dylan King is the team's center. "Our team kind of goes as he goes," Jasper said. "He may not always be scoring goals but he's earning exclusions and that's creating kick outs. With a man up advantage, he is super active in the middle and when he's successful, he gives us scoring opportunities."

Jasper likes his team to be aggressive on defense, starting out in a full press, playing man to man between the passing lanes and putting pressure on the ball. "We have a really good center defense with 6'5" Sam Storrs who allows us to be able to use that type of defense, and we will switch from press to different types of zones to help try to funnel the ball we want to go.

We're a complete team in that we understand our defensive philosophy and that helps to really fuel our offense."

Goalie Drew DeFrancisci has been very effective in the goal.

"Drew has quick reactions and hands, and he has really solidified our defense," Jasper said. "One of his strengths is passing and we have a lot of speed, so we definitely try to fuel our counterattack with our defense."

Jasper credits the players for their conditioning and camaraderie: "We're in really good shape physically due to a rigorous pre-season and there is great team camaraderie with everyone being on the same page, playing for each other," Jasper said. "Meshing the seniors with the sophomores has had its challenges but they're learning on the fly, and we just need to keep improving throughout the season."

MIRAMONTE

With the loss of twelve seniors to graduation and defensive stalwart Patrick Stice out with a hand injury, Miramonte has still managed to have a strong start to the season with a 12-9 record, including wins over nationally ranked Cathedral Catholic and Corona Del Mar in the South Coast Tournament.

"We're still a young team and finding our footing but we've come a long way over the course of last month," Co-Head Coach John Nash said. "Our sophomores Brady Hassett, Trent Smith, Riff McClear, Michael Robinson, Grayson Bloes, and Tyler Robinson are playing big minutes and doing a great job. We see ourselves as a very young team but we've seen massive improvements from the guys all year."

Juniors Brock Bliss and Tristan Tucker, and sophomore Grayson Bloes have led the offense. "Brock is a shooter and creator and Tristan, who spent time with the Cadet National team last summer, has

been an anchor for us at center. Grayson has been a great offensive threat for us," Co-Head Coach Lincoln Haley said.

With Stice out, Jackson Cherry and Ben Lucas have stepped up on the defense. "Jackson has been a real workhorse and Ben has been the guy we use against our opponent's best player," Haley said.

"Team defense is still a big part of our identity."

Jackson Liu and Cooper Stern have been splitting time in the net. "At 6'5" Cooper has great size in the goal," Haley said. "Liu is really aggressive coming out of the goal, and does a good job of being our seventh defender.

They're both good anchors and they both developing really quickly."

"We're really focused on defense and field blocking in particular," Nash said. "We know that come playoff time, we need to get the opposition below ten goals and so the defense has to improve in half court and transition."

ACALANES

Last season, Acalanes Head Coach Nick Jordan spoke of the growth of the Dons' team and midway through the season, that growth has been showing fruition, having doubled their win total from last year. "The team has bonded and their hard work is starting to pay off in the pool," Jordan said. "We have a lot of contributors and it's starting to culminate into success and wins.

The Dons have a

number of underclassmen, with the team as a whole being on the younger side. The team is led by seniors Justin Rosenblatt, Rocco Fraioli, and Sam Whipple, who have been on the team for a number of years. "We love them for that," Jordan said. "They've been doing a good job of being vocal leaders and holding guys accountable, and leading by example, doing the right things in and out of the pool."

There is a core of freshmen that came with club experience led by attackers Adrian Anderson, Charlie Holmes, Alexander Lavoie, Andre Owen, and Charlie Owens, and 2M Peter Endemann. "They are contributing at a high level for us and that's exciting," Jordan said. "They are competing hard and have earned their playing time. We have good depth, and our players are fighting for starting spots and getting quality playing time"

Junior Thomas Parrott is the team leader with 45 goals and scoring on 58.1% of his shots, and sophomore Isaac Topp with 26 goals and 26 assists. "Thomas has put in the work and it's paying off and putting him way ahead of everybody," Jordan said. "Isaac is doing a very good job for us as an attacker. It's good to see how he's continuing forward and continues to grow. We're attacking a lot of different things at the same time, trying to keep the defense on their toes, still using ba-

sic water polo principles - working our center, taking the outside shots and creating other looks as well, keeping things open so that if one thing fails, we've got something else to lean on."

Rosenblatt and junior Mason Schlehr have been the leaders on defense. "Justin continues to do a good job defensively and does a lot for us," Jordan said. "Mason brings that physicality and speed, communicating to our guys as to what they need to do and that's been huge."

Sophomore Fisher Bradford-Urban has been solid in the goal. "Fisher has taken a huge jump from last year and it's good to see him grow and keep getting better," Jordan said. "He's been doing well in one-on-one blocks and on counter attacks, and he's been helping our center defenders call the defense."

The defense has had a number of games where they have held their opponents in single digits, but a handful of games where they have given up a number of goals. "We're still working on just prioritizing and growing, and still being a young team, which comes with growing pains and we're still working through that, but it'll come around for sure. Our goal is to try and earn a playoff spot. We're close and hopefully it works out for us, and we get in," Jordan finished.

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