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Boys' Varsity Basketball Preview

By Conrad Basset



Adam Mancebo (14) shoots a lay-up in the Cougars' loss against Analy Photo: Andy Scheck

The Diablo-Foothill Athletic League boys' varsity basketball champion has come from Lamorinda the last several years; the three local teams will again be fighting for success in the post season.

Last year's champions, Miramonte, won 24 games and went on to finish as the NCS runner-up. The Matadors will return several key players. The team hopes to prepare for the regular season with a challenging non-league schedule.

Coach Dave Brown returns to lead the Matadors and said that the team literally has some big shoes to fill-those of departed Eric Obeysekere and his size 18 sneakers. Obeysekere has taken his game to Holy Cross in Massachusetts but the cupboard is certainly not bare. The Mats return two third-year starters in forward Chris Hatfield and Davis Louie. Hatfield averaged 17 points and six rebounds per game last year and Louie added eight points, four assists and two steals from his point guard position.

Other key contributors last year who return include senior forwards Spenser McDonald and Payam Vadi, both of whom played significant minutes as well as guards Troy Akin and Anthony Piganelli.

In addition, Miramonte adds several players from last year's junior varsity including sophomore Ross Anderson, Kazuya Tamura and Brian Henson. Several players are multi-sport athletes so the roster may be thin until football players such as Anderson, Ross Dolbec, and Jack Pietrykowski complete their season.

The Matadors opened their schedule on November 24 with a Foundation Game against Alameda, have games against perennial power St. Mary's (Berkeley) and Skyline, and are heading to tournaments at Granada High in Livermore and to the prestigious Max Preps Torrey Pines Classic in San Diego.

Over in Moraga, Campolindo, winners of three of the past five NCS championships, looks to rebound from last year's 15-12 campaign. Last year's team was young-only four seniors on the team. Like Miramonte, they will rely on a senior laden team paced by third year starter Adam Mancebo. They should be particularly strong inside with Kellen Ito and Matt Keeble also returning. Ito blocked 67 shots last year and Keeble hit 62 percent from the field.

Outside shooters and physical defenders include the returning guards Brett Banard, Jamie Fox, and Brian Sanders. They will have to make up for the departure of Chris Dyer who is playing water polo at UC Santa Barbara.

New to the team are junior post Garrett Franklin, and guards Carl King, Andrew Ahr and Alan Hickey up from the junior varsity. Coach Matt Watson is in his second year as head coach. He built a strong preseason as well. Last year's NCS champions, Analy, was Campo's first opponent and the Cougars fell 71 to 64. This year they again travel to three tournaments, including the always-tough Mission Prep Classic in San Luis Obispo.

In Lafayette, Darrell Hirashima, Jr. returns for his second year at the helm of the Dons who went on to the second round of last year's NCS tournament. They lost Steve Maze, David Masi, David Gomez and Justin Owyong to graduation but return a strong nucleus, including outside threat Corey Collins and the inside presence of Tyler Caldwell. Matt McGoldrick, Zach Bloom, Trevor Mooney and Jay Fowler should contribute even more as returning seniors.

The Dons also have an aggressive pre-season schedule, taking on San Ramon Valley and El Cerrito and staying local for the Chris Vontoure tournament at De La Salle.

The balance of the league should be improved as well. Dougherty Valley's team has been together for three years, Dublin has added a couple of good transfers, Las Lomas is always strong, and Alhambra looks to improve. All coaches agreed that there are no games where they do not have to be very prepared.

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