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Lamorinda Boys' Soccer Settles into Season

By Spencer Silva



Tom Higgins had a shot on goal during the match.



Garrett Johnson helped keep the Dons scoreless.

It was a brisk evening in Orinda when the Miramonte boys' soccer team (2-2-4) hosted the Acalanes Dons (3-6-2). The small crowd on hand on Jan. 7 was greeted not only by the cold air but also by back-and-forth gridlock on the pitch.

The end result was a 0-0 draw, but the game wasn't necessarily played between the penalty boxes. In fact, the Dons had eight shots on goal and the Mats had six. Both teams created scoring opportunities, but neither, ultimately, was able to put the ball in the net.

Acalanes spent much of the first half on offense, and, in the 31st minute, they created the game's first scoring opportunity when Danny Neyschloss escaped a lone defender and sent a searing kick that ricocheted off the near post.

In the 36th minute, just five minutes later, Tom Higgins barely stayed onside to get a one-on-one with Mats' keeper Garrett Johnson, but Higgins' strike went straight into Johnson's mitts.

As the game went along, the Mats offense picked up. After Acalanes nearly scored off a corner kick in the 74th minute, the Mats countered and

Aaron Roybal beat the last man on a through ball, missing a near-post goal by only inches.

Johnson registered an impressive eight saves on eight shots. His strong performance was the difference in the match for Miramonte. "I was focusing on being reserved, trying to organize my team," he said of the performance.

Miramonte's defense has been its calling card through its first seven matches. They've allowed just four goals; the struggles have come on offense. "We're trying to improve in the final third," explained coach Bilal Samy, "we need to put balls in the net."

On Jan. 9, they defeated Las Lomas 2-1 for their second win.

Acalanes coach Paul Curtis echoed Samy's sentiment, "We created three or four good opportunities, not spectacular ones, but good ones. We've been challenged to put together offense. It's tough to win when you don't put the ball in the net."

Curtis's team is in the midst of finding its identity. The roster is composed of mostly young, inexperienced players who haven't quite figured out how they fit into the

team's overall scheme.

"Our guys are still trying to identify their roles and figuring out what they need to be to help the team win," Curtis said, adding, "We need to mature together as a team."

On Jan. 9, Acalanes beat Alhambra in a 2-0 shutout. Ian Franklin and Luis Martinez scored for the Dons while Alex Longbeam recorded a shutout as goalkeeper.

The Campolindo Cougars (7-4-1) are also a team in transition. They lost 20 players from last year's varsity team and have dealt with a number of injuries and illnesses this winter. In spite of the adversity, the team is currently in second place in the DFAL behind Dublin High.

Coach Shane Carney explained the team's journey to find a rhythm.

"Finding consistency has been difficult," he explained. "The good thing that has come out of all of this is that we are getting used to the inconsistency and just know that each night it could be 11 totally different players who need to step up for the team to be successful."

The Cougars had a decisive 5-1 victory over Dougherty Valley, scoring four goals in the first half.

Photos Gint Federas



Danny Neyschloss almost scored, but his shot hit off of the goal post.

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