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## Baseball Teams Have High Hopes as DFAL Ramps Up

By Karl Buscheck



Senior Jake Berry is a key part of the Acalanes offensive success so far this spring. Photos Gint Federas

success is simple.

"We have a lot of good players. I think that's where it always starts," Santich-Hughes explained. "Not only do they have a lot of talent, (but) they really bought into the system that we had in place."

The Dons aren't just good - they're experienced - as seven starters return from last year's squad. Seniors Jake Berry and Tommy Henderson headline the offense, while senior Grant Young is the team's ace.

"Grant Young on the mound has been amazing. Santich-Hughes said of the lefty. "It's unbelievable. He's really anchored the staff and given us a lot of tough innings."

Like the Dons, the Mats also have postseason designs, even if the regular season has just begun.

"Our goals are usually the same every year," said Miramonte head coach Vince Dell'Aquila. "We just want to make the NCS tournament."

After falling 3-2 at Dublin on April 13, the Mats sit at 8-7 overall and 1-3 in DFAL - leaving the team tied for fifth place in the standings.

As Miramonte aims to climb back up the DFAL pecking order, the team will be relying on seniors to lead the way. James Vaccaro, who will be pitching at USC next spring, is the team's number one starter, and Tim Tague, the starting quarterback for the football team last fall, is the second starter.

At the plate, Eric Nyman, who recently broke his finger, powers the lineup. Meanwhile, Zach Wong wears a number of hats.

"Zach Wong is our shortstop and he pitches," Dell'Aquila said. "And he's our leadoff hitter and he's

All three Lamorinda baseball programs have lofty expectations for 2016. Nowhere is that more true than Acalanes.

"We set the goals before each season and our goal is always to win an NCS," said Dons head coach Justin Santich-Hughes. His team is currently MaxPreps' No. 20 team in the state.

Despite falling to Clayton Valley Charter 8-4 on April 15 in Walnut Creek, Acalanes is an early DFAL front-runner, holding a 3-0 record in league and a 13-2 mark overall.

"League titles are nice, but winning the last game of the season - if you make the playoffs - is really the ultimate goal," Santich-Hughes said. "So, that's our goal: To win the NCS championship and we don't have any problems talking about it."

For the reigning DFAL champs, the secret to

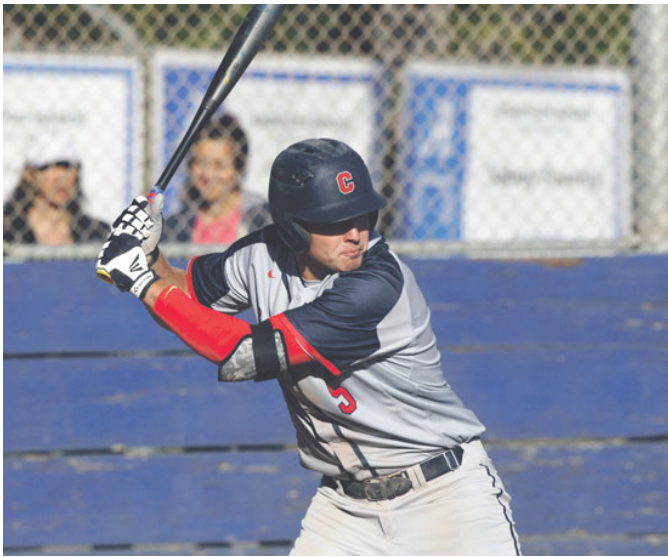
doing real well."

Campolindo recently got back to the .500 mark - 7-7 overall and 2-1 in DFAL - after drubbing Dougherty Valley 9-2 in Moraga on April 12, and then edging out Redwood Christian 3-1 on the road April 14.

As the season rolls on, the Cougars will be zeroing in on the same objective as their local rivals.

"Our goal is to win NCS," explained senior Max Flower, a Cal baseball commit who patrols the outfield for the baseball team and was a star wide receiver for the school's football team that advanced to the CIF State Division III-AA championship bowl game. "And the only obstacle we have ever faced and will ever face is ourselves. If we play our best baseball, we will have no problem."

Before the end of the league slate, the Cougars will have a crack at both of their neighbors, as they hit the road to face Miramonte on April 28 and host Acalanes less than a week later on May 3.



Cal-bound senior Max Flower patrols center field for the Cougars and hits in the middle of their lineup.



USC-bound senior James Vaccaro anchors both the Mats' lineup and pitching rotation.

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

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