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Lamorinda Cross Country

By Jon Kingdon



Lamo archive Photo Gint Federas

athletic program at Campolindo, not just with cross country. We were lucky to have Chris Walsh who established the program in the '90s and 2000s and I've been here now for 14 years."

With some early season injuries on the girls team, the Cougars are taking the season a step at a time, says Woolridge: "We're being cautious because we have great talent and it's a long season so we're trying to put the pieces together slowly."

Paloma Hancock, the number one finisher at state, is the team's leading runner and is just now getting back to running after suffering a stress reaction in the spring. Sophia Webster, who finished second at state, is also returning from an injury in the spring.

With Hancock and Webster out, the leading runner for Campolindo has been Alicia Hober. Freshman Ellie Buckley has also impressed Woolridge, bringing experience and a pedigree to the team: "Ellie looks to be somebody who's going to contribute to the varsity squad. She ran for the Diablo Valley Track and Field Club and is the younger sister of Teddy Buckley (now running at the University of Kansas), who was our top runner the last three years."

Leading the team both on the track and off have been Hancock, Hober and Ellie Guthrie and Sarah Naughten.

The Campolindo boys team is carrying on their tradition of success, says Woolridge: "We're ranked No. 2 in the state and in Division III and we are motivated to do better after being beaten by Maria Carillo (Santa Rosa, the No. 1 ranked team). We know what the challenge is that lies before us and we're going to try and take the next seven weeks to try and close the gap."

Senior Cayden Hein has stepped into the role as the leading runner this year, following Teddy Buckley's graduation and junior Dylan Gunn is ranked just below Hein. "Those two finished third and fourth in our first meet," said Woolridge. "We are looking for them to be a good force up front for us."

In a recent report by the National Federation of State High School Associations, there was a decline in sports participation for the first time in 30 years for the 2018-19 season. They must not have included the Lamorinda high school cross country teams which have a combined total of nearly 300 participants (Miramonte-115, Campolindo-85, Acalanes 85).

Campolindo

Campolindo head coach Chuck Woolridge, whose cross country teams have been a perpetual force through the years, attributes the success of the program to the athletes and their forebears: "We've been fortunate to have generations of athletes that come into our program, learn how we do things and pass it on to the next group of athletes. There is a lot of community support and a really robust

Woolridge feels good about the depth of the team: "We come back with four athletes that returned to us that were on the varsity last year and we feel we're in pretty good shape. We also have a freshman runner, Alex Lodewick, who ran for the Diablo Valley Track and Field Club. He has shown promise and has been working out with the varsity team. We're being conservative but we expect to have him running with the varsity."

Senior leadership is crucial to the team but four-year runners, Dylan Cronin and Sam Morasch have really stepped up, according to Woolridge: "Dylan and Sam bring a ton of experience to the team. They have been around championship athletes and teams. They're passionate about continuing the legacy of the team and they take it very seriously."

Miramonte

Miramonte head coach Brian Henderson is taken with his team's attitude and performance so far: "The vibe of the team this year is pretty good. We're improving our commitment level and our performance has improved a ton. After the first meet, we had a number of kids that improved from 15 to 30 seconds in a two-mile race."

Junior Audrey Allen, who only began running as a freshman, is the team's top runner, says Henderson: "Audrey has improved tremendously and has become one of the top distance runners in the area. She won the Ed Sias Invitational, which was hosted by Campolindo. She won the small school varsity race and our team won the invitational."

Two sophomores, Kate Riley and Claire Nolet, are the next two ranked runners on the team.

The three captains are Riley, Allen and senior Athena Davis. "They make sure that the kids are taking seriously at the right time," says Henderson. "It's very important to have those kinds of kids so that coaches aren't the only ones spreading the message. They set the tone and that's why the vibe for the team is better this year than last, and last year's was better than the one before that because that leadership has grown over the last few years."

On the boys side, co-captain Freddie Bell is the number one runner on the team followed by junior Ryan Gottschalk. Following these two, it's still unsettled as to who will be running in the meets, says Henderson: "We have a number of young talented guys that are pushing the upperclassmen and trying to find their way into the top group. Simon Neuwirth-Stein, a newcomer has been showing a lot of promise."

Besides Bell, Henderson has been relying on senior Matthew O'Brien and junior Alex Meckes to help in the team's leadership: "Matthew is the spirit leader that gets everybody jazzed up and Alexis very good about communicating, leading and taking charge."

Acalanes

As an ultra-marathoner, when Acalanes co-head coach Jeff Hutson (along with Ed Basaldua) speaks on running, he knows of whence he speaks. "Campolindo and Miramonte have had a lot more continuity than we've had. When I started, I was an assistant coach and became co-head coach last year with Ed. I like where we are right now in comparison with the last couple of years. We have some great continuity. The kids are big on collaborating and supporting one another and it is really neat chemistry this year and it makes our job a lot easier. For the first time in a long time, we have a lot of depth. I'm very optimistic with the depth of the team."

Junior Nicole Frigon is the Don's leading runner. Sophomore Lauren Yee has also been very impressive and will be running with the varsity. "With 28 girls on the roster we have a number of girls that will have the opportunity to run with the varsity. We're starting to show some depth which is nice and we have some freshmen that will be really good next year."

Sophomores Katrina Ortman and Aysha Craig have both shown great form. Frigon, Yee and Lena Johnson and Taylor are the leaders on the team and the overall team is one that Hutson very much

appreciates: "The girls are fantastic. They are delightful to coach as they have such positive attitudes and love for each other."

Junior Sam Roth is the team's leading runner followed by seniors Andrew Owens, Nick Hutson and junior Dom Basaldua with a number of runners competing to fill out the roster for the matches. Co-captain Rayce Walton and sophomore Loic Windfuhr-Durand and freshmen Tyler Hunt and Bennett Dodge are leading candidates to fill those positions but, says Hutson, "We have a lot of freshman and sophomores that will be running with the varsity."

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