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Miramonte concludes second undefeated season with NorCal victory

By Jon Kingdon



Miramonte players, coaches and parents Photo
Ann Murphy

3 in the fourth to make the final score 16-8. As it has been all season, movement was the key for Roemer's offense.

"We don't run a typical center-based offense but one where we continually move which generates more ejections by the other team and when we ran that offense this season, it was the best I've ever seen it run," Roemer said. "Today we had the most ejections by our opponent in any game this season."

There were four seniors (Lucy Berkman-Harvard, Dania Innis-UCLA, Allie Lurie-Princeton, and McAninch-USC) who lettered all four years for the Matadors, battling through the pandemic to conclude their careers with championships and a career won loss record of 87-6.

"Having a shortened COVID season made me appreciate all of the traditions at Miramonte," Lurie said. "Even with some new players every year, we were always a family. This is the most unselfish team I've ever been a part of and the way we played for each other just brought so much fun and life to the game."

Innis spoke about how many of them started playing together when they were 12 and how special the victory today was to her. "The second championship is a little different because we're seniors," Innis said. "It's amazing to be able to carry this tradition of winning at Miramonte. Coach Roemer brought this offense which really showcased all of our skills as a team and has helped us grow as individuals and players."

Roemer was quick to share the credit for the team's success to the character of his players. "These girls are extremely motivated in the pool and in their academics," Roemer said. "They have really high self-esteem and have not had any behavioral issues or drama. It's the chemistry that is phenomenal. The tradition that was here prior to my arrival was having fun and keeping the players motivated."

In the end, Roemer knew not to take for granted the talent of this team and the seniors who led the way. "Their legacy is going to last a long time," Roemer said. "I don't think there's going to be a team like this, with this much talent at one time for quite a while."

The Lamorinda girls water polo teams do not lack for respect from the powers that be. In the seedings for the Open Division North Coast Section championships, the top seed in order were Miramonte (1), Campolindo (2) and Acalanes (3) and with all qualifying for the NorCal Tournament, the respective rankings were 1-3-5.

Campolindo

With a 17-10 record, Campolindo coach Kim Everist had a lot to celebrate. "I feel good about our season," Everist said. "An outsider might look at our final record and not be overly impressed but of our 10 losses, five games against the undefeated No. 1 team (Miramonte), one to the No. 2 team (Soquel), two to the No. 4 team, along with two wins (Acalanes) and two to the No. 7 team along with two wins (Sacred Heart Prep). We also won the Acalanes tournament and finished third at Arroyo Grande and in the NorCal tournament."

After a road victory over Sacred Heart Prep, the Cougars faced Miramonte in the NorCal semi-finals and matched them for a time early in the game, eventually losing 18-9. "Playing a team with such a storied

program, we made the best of a tough situation, and our girls had a great time," Everist said. "We started well but you just can't make mistakes against them, and the second quarter got away from us, but we had a lot of fun in the second half. After the game, the whole team and their parents met at the Canyon Club and spirits were really high."

Campolindo is losing four seniors to graduation, goalie Shayne Clancy, Kaia Levenfeld, Ava Jacuzzi, and Lauren Lacour, all of whom were named captains.

"They are a very special senior class," Everist said. "Each brought a different strength to the team, and they worked together cohesively, leaving a great legacy behind and making it very special for the girls who are returning. Shayne, who shared time with freshman Sydney Kring in the goal, really supported her. She brought an incredible heart and got something out of everyone which will be something for Sydney to aspire to."

Everist is already optimistic about next year's team. "I'm looking forward to seeing how our seniors (Grace Gafni, Ana Pieper, and London Menard) grow, develop, and conquer lots of things over the next nine months in preparation for 2023. "We have a lot of young players on the team that have a great time training and playing and really like each other and that seals the whole thing. Our future is going to be very bright."

Everist coached a number of the girls on the Miramonte team and acknowledged the seniors on that team. "I'm so proud of the Miramonte team as most of their girls are kids that we coached at Lamorinda," Everist said. "This senior group put their minds to it when they were about 12 and saw it all the way through high school and it was fun to watch them from the outside."

Acalanes

For Acalanes coach Misha Buchel, this year's 21-8 season was "Absolutely a successful season. At the start of the season, we did not know how good we would be and how we would grow through the season, and I'll take finishing in the top three any time."

With so many standouts having graduated last year, this team had its own unique character. "What I really liked about our team was that we were so much more balanced and how it redeveloped itself with some internal growth and with the new arrivals fitting in perfectly," Buchel said. "That's what I found most satisfying about the team. Even with (freshman) Ella Del Rosario our leading scorer (85 goals), the whole focus of the team was not around her, it was more team play and everyone felt more involved and feeling like they were contributing."

Despite having to play in such a competitive league, Buchel acknowledges how unique this area is. "It really is amazing that our little community of Lamorinda and our half of the league is, on a pretty consistent basis, consistently three of the top teams in the entire northern region," Buchel said.

With a core of graduating seniors that saw the varsity go undefeated their freshman season, it was important to Buchel that they not bear the burden of someone else's success. "They began their careers with a team that was the best, to being on a team that was in the mix without any type of frustration," Buchel said. "We made it clear to the girls that they had to chart their own path and make sure that they were playing for themselves and their teammates as hard as they could and they always played with joy, passion, and fight. They were a great group to coach, and I will really miss them. They let our underclassman know that this is not a three-month season, and they have to put in the work like swimming with the high school team and playing outside to improve their game."

If there is one question that Buchel needs to answer, it's who will be replacing all-star goalie Audrey Cox. "That is what the next nine months are going to bring," Buchel said. "Whether someone falls from the sky or someone chooses to pursue that position. The number one rule of playing goalie is that you have to want to play goalie and that is our number one goal to sort out for next year."

With Del Rosario, Wendy Heffelfinger, Brooklyn Pomp, Sophie Hendrickson and Levand Koopah, Buchel will be approaching next season with great optimism.

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