

Published November 22nd, 2023

Miramonte wins NCS championship with victories over Acalanes and Campolindo

By Jon Kingdon



Miramonte girls victory celebration Photo Jane Bordalo

Miramonte entered the CIF tournament as the No. 1 seed having won the DAL and NCS tournament with a composite record of 25-2. After defeating Acalanes 11-8 in the semifinals, Miramonte faced Campolindo for the seventh time this year and came away with the championship by a score of 10-5 for a combined record of 83-2 these past three years.

"I'm pretty surprised because I thought this year was going to be pretty challenging," said head coach John Roemer, who graduated nine seniors from last year's team. "We've been up and down so it's been hard to figure out who's going to show up at some games. In a way, it's been a lot more fun because it's wasn't automatic."

Leading the team have been seniors Tali Stryker and Rosalie Hassett. "We wouldn't be where we were now without Rosalie and Tali," Roemer said. "Their leadership is amazing. They've stepped up not only in the pool but in leadership roles in getting the girls focused and having them understand what it takes to win a championship. It's more than just playing well - it's a mindset and the other girls are beginning to understand that."

Junior goalie Eliana Bottene really played well as a first-time starter and was the MVP in the Rio Grande Tournament. Other new starters this year were Audrina Kang, Alden Coate, Roxy Tarantino, and Mira Haldar all contributed a lot along with the starters.

Campolindo

With a roster of only three seniors, co-captains Ana Pieper, London Menard and Grace Gafni, and a solid core of underclassmen, Campolindo finished the regular season with a 19-7 record and only one loss to a non-Lamorindan team and entered the CIF tournament as the No. 2 seed.

"Their leadership has been outstanding, and the girls really loved them and a lot of it has nothing to do with water polo," head coach Kim Everist said.

Campolindo would defeat Arroyo Grande 12-9 and Sacred Heart Prep 10-9, avenging an earlier season defeat to make it to the CIF championship game but once again, came up short to Miramonte 10-5.

Still, Pieper and Menard's performance in the pool can't be overlooked. "Ana's a killer on the outside and despite every team trying to stop her, she still finds a way to score," Everist said. "London's is a tremendous center that you have to run a zone against and is effective passing or scoring inside."

Juniors Nikki and Sammy Frazier and freshman Lily Holloway have also been forces on offense and Holloway and Ainsley Hogan have also been strong on defense with a number of steals.

Sydney Kring's play in the net has been outstanding but with 35 steals is a stat not to be overlooked. "Sydney is very active and mobile in front of the cage," Everist said. "She's always thinking one step ahead and that one of the things that makes her a tremendous goalkeeper and it says a lot about why we're in the position we're in."

Acalanes

This may have been as dominant a season as the Lamorinda girls water polo teams have had in their history. Miramonte, Campolindo, and Acalanes had a combined won-lost record of 65-16 but when the games between each other are removed, their combined record is 54-3 for a 95% winning record against non-Lamorinda teams.

The rivalry is a huge part of the area's success, according to Acalanes head coach Misha Buchel: "That's a huge part of it. The community and culture from the rec teams all the way up and it provides that great base of which to build and the desire to beat your neighbor is really powerful."

Miramonte

Following two undefeated seasons and championships, Miramonte entered the CIF tournament as the No. 1

Coming into the CIF tournament as the five seed with a 19-7 record, Acalanes was coming off a five-overtime win over Carondelet and defeated Soquel 9-7 after trailing 7-5 entering the fourth period along with a number of close wins all season. "It's a trademark of us in general, but this group, in particular, accepts that there's no gifts," Buchel said. "We've had solid and consistent efforts throughout the season."

The Dons then lost in the CIF semifinals to Miramonte 11-8, knowing at least that they were the only team to beat Miramonte this season, having done so twice.

The team has been led by a solid core of seniors, Wendy Heffelfinger, Brooklyn Plomp, Sophie Hendrickson, and Liv Hoppe.

Not to be overlooked is sophomore Ella Del Rosario's season of scoring dominance with 96 goals along with the play of freshmen goalie Adelyn Horciza and field player Finley Graff. "Our freshmen have been huge," Buchel said. "Adelyn has been as good in the goal as anybody in the area. Finley has grown up on the fly coming out of 14 and under water polo. She's thrived and been great offensively and was also willing when called upon to be one of our primary matchups against our opponents' interior players."

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA