

SPORTS

LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Lady Mats Keep Dons Scoreless

By Joey Epperson



Mats' deBack controls ball by Acalanes' Blee (left) and Whittom during Mats win, 4-0 Photo Bob Johnson

On January 28, the Acalanes Lady Dons (10-3-3) traveled to Miramonte to face last season's NCS champion Lady Matadors (8-0) in a battle of two cross-town DFAL soccer powerhouses. The Dons had not suffered a loss in ten attempts, their last loss dating all the way back to December 17, against Alhambra. But the Mats offense was intense. Though Dons' goalkeeper Angela Lescala-Gruenewald compiled 7 saves, the Mats prevailed, 4-0.

The Matadors came out firing with an early goal by Katherine Sander, assisted by Marissa Corsetti. The following ten minutes saw three Matador breakaways fended off by the spectacular saves by Lescala-Gruenewald.

With 19 minutes remaining in the half, the Mats continued their attack by way of a beautiful left-footed goal from Mekenna deBack to make the score 2-nil Miramonte. It seemed as if the Dons were

going to get on the board just under ten minutes remaining in the half after a cross from Michelle Caine to Celina Velasco. However, with the Matador defense closing in on her, Velasco missed, just high off the crossbar.

The start of the second half saw beautiful ball handling by the Matadors, led by deBack and Sander. Off a pass from Sander, the speedy deBack turned the corner and took off down field, which left only one defender to beat. Cutting back to the middle, deBack put the ball past the keeper into the bottom left corner of the goal, giving her a second goal on the night and making the score 3-0 Mats.

Looking to split the Miramonte defense on a strong counter with 28 minutes left, Velasco went down with a low back injury and had to be taken out of the game. Down this key player, the Dons took another shot on goal in the 15th minute, but Manning's save kept the

Dons scoreless.

It was all Miramonte after that, as Sander showed more fine dribbling and then scored to give the Matadors their 4th goal of the night.

Focusing on the team's chemistry, Mats captain, senior Elaine Tanski, explained how they've achieved a 31-1-2 two-season record: "We returned a team full of seniors so we have a lot of experience, and we have also been playing together for a long, long time, which gives us an edge when it comes down to the wire."

This time things certainly clicked right for the Matadors, who made 16 attempts on goal. If not for Lescala-Gruenewald's intense protection of the Dons' goal, game results would have been more lopsided.

Both teams continued DFAL play Friday. An Acalanes home game against Alhambra ended in a tie, 1-1. Meanwhile, the Mats trounced Dublin, 8-1.

LMSC Alum Sassano Inspires Youth Soccer Players

Submitted by Mary Brown



Photo Mary Brown

Youth athletic programs can be the launching pad for a career in sports, even right here in our own backyard. For professional football, there is Ken Dorsey from Orinda. For Olympic swimming, there is Natalie Coughlin, who grew up in Lafayette. And for professional soccer, there is 23 year old Luke Sassano, an Orinda native and Cal graduate who now plays Major League Soccer (MLS) for the New York Red Bulls. The Red Bulls reached the MLS finals for the first time after drafting Sassano in 2008.

From the age of 11 until 18, Sassano played soccer for the Lamorinda Soccer Club (LMSC), a soccer program for Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda youth ages 7-18.

Every weekend in January, drivers along Highway 24 could see

150 kids on Bentley High School's new state of the art turf field. These young players, ages 7-11, were participating in LMSC'S Winter Development Clinics, working through 9 stations over the course of the morning, covering skills ranging from dribbling moves to footwork to "one on one" practice.

On January 17, LMSC welcomed Sassano home to visit with these young players who are as eager to practice the fundamentals and play soccer as he was many years ago.

Sassano spent time with the players on the field, alongside Technical Director, Mohamed Mohamed, and his Winter Clinic Instructional Team of professional coaches, college players, and older LMSC players. In between, the kids

gathered with balls, t-shirts and player cards to collect the autograph of this real life, professional soccer player in their midst.

After the ink in Sassano's Sharpie had finally run dry, Sassano reflected on these young soccer players: "It was great spending time with them and seeing how youth soccer has grown. Coming here is like visiting family. At LMSC, I learned not only the skills, but (also) the passion, persistence, and teamwork to reach my goals in soccer and in other life situations. I feel fortunate to have been coached here, and it continues to be a great ride."

As if to make the point, a 9-year-old player returning for a second season -- having finished a morning of good, hard work and fun -- stepped into one of the cars at the long pick-up line at the curb and announced to his parents, "Soccer rocks!"

For information about LMSC or upcoming 2009 team tryouts, visit www.lamorindasoccer.com.

Acalanes Out-Pins Dougherty Valley

Submitted by Joyce Reyes



Photo Joyce Reyes

The Acalanes wrestling team won a decisive 48-10 dual meet victory over Dougherty Valley's 7-man varsity squad on Thursday, January 30, on the Wildcat's San Roman campus.

Acalanes junior Robert Royster is pictured using a head and arm lock to go for the winning pin in the

217-pound weight class against Dougherty Valley's Gilbert.

Four other Acalanes wrestlers also won matches by pin -- Matt Feld (at 127 pounds), Conor O'Herin (154), Chris Scanlin (191) and Mike Rule (287).

Dougherty Valley opened in 2007 and has yet to have a senior

Acalanes 48, Dougherty Valley 10 At Dougherty Valley

- 105: double forfeit
- 114: double forfeit
- 121: Gerdali (DV) d. Reyes 17-1
- 127: Feld (A) p. Ruckman 5:09
- 132: double forfeit
- 137: double forfeit
- 142: R. Gilbert (DV) p. Reardon 1:58
- 147: Rudin (A) by FF
- 154: O'Herin (A) p. Andrade 1:27
- 162: Lindgren (A) by FF
- 173: Zayac (A) by FF
- 191: Scanlin (A) p. Campbell 1:38
- 217: Royster (A) p. Gilbert 3:19
- 287: Rule (A) p. Nunez 2:58

class. Its growing program made a good showing at the meet, winning two of the seven matches actual wrestled, one by pin and one by decision.

Three weeks remain of regular season dual meets and then it's on to the DFAL championships held this year at Campolindo on February 21.

Lamorinda Rowers Invited to High Performance Sculling Camp

Submitted by Resa Lenczowski



Photo Rosie D'Orazio

Two Lamorinda teens were among three Oakland Strokes' rowers who attended the January 8-11, invitation-only High Performance Camp in Tempe, Ariz. These rowers, pictured left to right, are Jessica Buffington (Berkeley High) and Miramonte juniors Kelly Bauer and Elizabeth Lenczowski.

The High Performance Camp provides Junior National Team coaches the opportunity to work with a select group of athletes early in the

year, and is considered an integral part of the preparation for the U.S. Rowing Selection Camp held in June.

Athletes participating in the June camp compete for a position on the 2009 U.S. Junior Selection Team, which ultimately competes at the Junior World Championships in France in August.

High Performance Camp invitees are typically standout "scullers" who have earned top race results at national sculling competi-

tions and have demonstrated technical performance, endurance and strength.

"Selection Camp can open the door to a wide range of international training and racing opportunities," says Strokes women's varsity coach, Ian P. Simpson.

Buffington, Bauer and Lenczowski competed at regattas on the east coast last summer, including the Club Nationals in Camden, NJ. Lenczowski also competed internationally at the Royal Canadian Henley in Ontario.

Oakland Strokes, Inc., is one of the premier rowing programs on the west coast. The program is open to full-time high school students interested in learning to row and compete in the sport. Its program includes Junior Men's and Junior Women's crews at both varsity and novice levels.

In addition to technique and fitness, the Strokes program emphasizes teamwork, leadership, initiative, dedication and fellowship.

For more information, go to www.oaklandstrokes.org

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