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## Waiting for the Missing Piece

*Basketball teams prep for preseason without key football players*

By Conrad Bassett



Acalanes looks to rebuild after a tough year. Photos Gint Federas

In the meantime, the team was preparing as best as it could. Starting guard Matt O'Reilly returns for his junior season along with seniors Walter Brennan, Luke Hoyle, Ryan Smith, Andrew Cassidy and junior Chris Hansen. Each player will be asked to fill the roles left by graduated seniors Tyler Garrison, Jack Evans, John Schmitz and Matt McCue.

"We have some size, speed and shooters and we should be very competitive on a nightly basis," said Watson.

The Cougars have a highly competitive pre-league schedule, including games against perennial powerhouses Burlingame and St. Mary's Stockton and a rematch against Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Over in Orinda, Drew McDonald is back for his second season as head coach at Miramonte. Last year, the Matadors went 17-11 overall and 8-4 in the DFAL.

McDonald's first order of business is replacing six graduated seniors, including three-time all-DFAL player Kiran Shastri, who is currently averaging 12 points per game as a freshman at Chaminade University in Hawaii.

"We're looking for senior Ray Clark, juniors Moneer Mujaddidi and Jake Linares, who contributed off the bench last year, to step up and play bigger roles," McDonald said. "We're expecting sophomore Will Hicks to help us this year after playing JVs last year."

The Mats also return all-DFAL guard senior Joey Goodreault and junior guard Jackson Wegener.

McDonald faces the same challenges as Watson, as he also starts the season without his dual-sport athletes. There are as many as 11 varsity and junior varsity players still playing football, including senior Drew Anderson.

As always, the Mats will tackle an aggressive pre-season schedule including the prestigious Mission Prep Christmas Classic in San Luis Obispo, a tournament that traditionally has some of the top teams.

This season, Acalanes basketball will start a new era under first-year head coach Bill Powers, who comes to the Dons after several successful years at Monte Vista in Danville and as an assistant at the junior college level.

Powers takes over a team that struggled at times. The Dons finished 8-18 overall and went 3-9 in the DFAL.

The Dons will build around a core of seniors. "The group of seniors is amongst the most special groups I have seen," said Powers. "They inspire me."

Seniors who will be important for the Dons' success are Zack Kisner and Matt Thomas, whose three-point shooting will stretch opposing defenses. Senior Ross Teichman will help as well. "[He] has a strong inside-outside game," said Powers.

Inside, the Dons return senior Buster Souza who was a force a year ago in scoring, rebounding, and shot blocking.

The Dons will also face a transition as football players switch gears. Seniors Brett Merrill and Kyle Kinnear just finished football and "are banged up" but should be ready to contribute quickly.

The point guard position will be manned by two new varsity players, junior Joey Hewitt and sophomore Andrew McKendell.

Powers will also be challenging his team early with away games at Sir Francis Drake and St. Mary's Stockton.

All three teams will be on the road for pre-season. DFAL regular season action begins on Jan. 7.



Miramonte is still down players from the football team.



Campolindo is ready to build on last year's success.

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