

# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Miramonte Wins NCS

Mats, Cougars advance to State Tournament

By Conrad Bassett



Mariah Seals had 11 points in the win.

Photos Gint Federas

Two weeks ago, Miramonte girls' basketball coach Kelly Sopak was expecting to play for the North Coast Section Division III championship at St. Mary's College against Bishop O'Dowd. It was a fair assumption given the teams have faced off the past two years.

However, O'Dowd was excluded from playing in the tournament for violation of an NCS rules and instead, Miramonte played Encinal (Alameda) for the title.

Encinal defeated Campolindo in the semifinals 72-52 to reach the title

game. Campo reached the semifinals by holding off Petaluma 54-49 behind freshman Brooke Panfili's 20 points.

In the NCS championship on March 8, the Mats cruised to a 94-42 victory.

The Mats steamrolled both Pinole Valley and Analy (Sebastopol) on their way to the championship game, which was close for only the first minute. Senior Megan Reid scored the first two baskets on layups and the Mats never looked back. Reid scored eight first period points pacing the Mats to a 33-10 lead. Sophomore

Sabrina Ionescu dropped in 11 in the first.

The Mats pushed the lead to 56-16 with 2:14 to go in the second quarter and went on to lead after three quarters 87 to 35, which set in place the running clock the rest of the way. Senior Breanna Alford led all scorers with 21 points. "We all worked together as a team," she said of their victory. Eleven different players scored for Miramonte.

Both Miramonte and Campolindo teams will be continuing their seasons, having qualified for the California Interscholastic Federation's state tournament.

Miramonte received the No. 6 seed in the Open Division and were rewarded with a trip to San Joaquin Delta College the night of March 14 where they will face St. Mary's of Stockton at 7 p.m. The Mats lost to St. Mary's last year. This year, The Mat's only loss came from Salesian, a team that St. Mary's defeated by 16 points.

Even so, the Mats are optimistic. Sopak said, "We are excited! This is the second year in a row we have qualified for the CIF open division."

The Cougars received the No. 7 seed in the Division III bracket and are playing tonight, March 12, at home at 7 p.m. against Soquel from Santa Cruz County.

"We are very excited to have earned a chance to play in the NorCal play-offs. I know that Soquel was 18-8 and went to the CCS finals," said head coach Art Thoms. "We are looking forward to the challenge."

The Cougars have been preparing for the post season since the start of the year and hope to make a run starting tonight. "The experience of playing a very difficult schedule during the season will pay dividends as we try to extend the season."



Uriah Howard added 10 points.



Teammates celebrate winning the NCS title.

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