

LAMORINDA SPORTS



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Lady Mats Continue Undefeated March

By Karl Buscheck



Senior All-American Sabrina Ionescu (20), Aubrey Wagner (10) and Haley Van Dyke (11) Photos Gint Federas

The Miramonte girls' basketball team is still sporting an unblemished 17-0 record (5-0 in league), as the squad carves through the DFAL schedule and a daunting slate of non-league challenges.

The team's banner win came on Jan. 15 at the MLK Showcase in Stockton when the Mats breezed past Mater Dei – then the No. 7 team in the state – 65-47.

"I think outside of postseason, this is one of the biggest wins in school history, for sure, to beat a team like Mater Dei," head coach Kelly Sopak declared, as he stood inside Morelli Gym, the home of St. Mary's of Stockton, the top-ranked team in nation.

The Mats were on the wrong side of a 67-45 score-line against Mater Dei in the same building during the 2015 edition of the Showcase. With that in mind, junior Ellie Louie agreed with her coach's assessment.

"Last year we lost to Mater Dei and we didn't feel very good about it," Louie said. "So, this year was revenge."

The most impressive part about Miramonte's comfortable win over Mater Dei was that the team got its

revenge without even playing its sharpest game.

"We could've [played better]," Louie admitted. "We were sloppy on some plays, but that's just kind of how our system goes. There's turnovers and mistakes and we've just got to play through it."

With a group of college coaches watching from the stands, senior Sabrina Ionescu dropped 26 points on the perennial powerhouse.

"I've watched her a lot over the years, and the scouting report... she can do everything," said Jonas Chatterton, an assistant for Oregon State, one of the programs chasing Ionescu. "She's shooting the ball so well right now in her senior year as well as just running her team and leading her team. And I think she's as good as she wants to be."

On Jan. 18, Ionescu was one of 24 players from across the country tabbed to play in the McDonald's All-American Game. The guard will suit up for the West squad in the exhibition clash on April 1 at the United Center in Chicago.

In the DFAL, Ionescu and her teammates have made quick work of their league opponents. The Mats thumped Alhambra 80-17 on the

road on Jan. 12, handled Dublin 73-35 at home three days later and rolled past Dougherty Valley 94-46 during a trip to San Ramon on Jan. 22.

One day after taking down Dougherty Valley, the Mats picked up yet another win against a big-time non-league opponent, Carondelet, whom they beat 89-65 in the Lamorinda Classic at Bentley in Lafayette.

Even though the Mats posted a double-digit win against the perennial powerhouse Cougars (ranked No. 48 in the state), it was far from a flawless night for Miramonte. In the first half alone, the Mats were called for 12 fouls.

"You've got to adjust to the officials," Sopak said. "We have to do a better job of maintaining composure and not expressing emotions, you know?"

The team also struggled from the field throughout the contest, leaving Sopak less than thrilled with the final result.

"I mean, I'm just very disappointed overall in our effort and our shooting," Sopak said. "We're not going to get very far with how we played. So we're going to have to get a lot better."



Junior Ellie Louie (13) and Aubrey Wagner (10)

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