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Players show strengths in tough tennis matches

By Jon Kingdon



Celia Campo (Campolindo)



Sasha Schtein (Acalanes)



Eliza Bates (Acalanes)

Photos Gint Federas

Campolindo High School, which has historically had competitive tennis teams, has this season become the victim of senior graduations and coming up on the wrong side of a couple of 5-4 matches, compiling a 2 and 7 record so far this season.

Coaches Steve Robinson and Sunun Faulkner anticipated that it was going to be a challenging season with respect to wins and losses. "We have a very young team," Robinson said. "We only have two seniors in our starting line up, for most matches, with lots of freshman and sophomores."

Despite this, Robinson appreciates how his players have maintained a positive attitude. "We have great team spirit. The girls are committed and working hard."

Co-captains Jessalyn Simon-Parker and Hannah Mc Donnell have provided the necessary leadership for the team, keeping everyone focused through some difficult losses. Simon-Parker plays No. 1 singles and Mc Donnell plays No. 1 doubles.

Robinson can find the positives on his team. "There is a lot of athletic talent on the team and we have good depth which is shown by our success with our doubles teams."

Six of Campolindo's seven singles players are either freshmen or sophomores, which bodes well for the team's future, though Robinson says, "The key is for the girls to work hard in the off season."

Miramonte's coach, Michael McCollom, almost finds it difficult to control his effusiveness when he discusses his team. With a 13-1 record (6-0 in league play) McCollom states the obvious: "We're having a great season at a time when there are so many talented players in the East Bay."

The top player for the Matadors is freshman Amber Lee, a nationally ranked player

for the 16 and unders. Playing in other tournaments has forced McCollom to substitute for Lee in some matches. Freshman Macey Dowd, who normally plays No. 2 singles, has stepped in for Lee when necessary with great success. Yet this is a team blessed with players from all four grades. McCollom has utilized his depth, having played 19 different players through the season. "I've never had a team with such depth and consistency – right down the line," he said. "They're all great kids – all good students – it's just a marvelous team."

With so many freshmen playing, McCollom has found great support from the seniors on his team.

Co-captains Allison Burkholder (singles), Olivia Kudszes (doubles) and Kiki Immel (doubles) have provided leadership both on and off the court, as has Annabelle Lee (singles).

This is crucial to McCollom. "The leadership from the seniors is all about making it a supportive environment," he said. "The upperclassmen on the team make it an accountable and cohesive group. This is essential, especially with so many freshmen. They are passing on the culture and the legacy of winning here. The significance of their efforts is evident in the team's record."

It has been an up and down season for the Acalanes tennis team. Having to overcome a series of injuries and illnesses, the team went into some of their matches short-handed.

Coach Valery Jorgensen, one of a triumvirate of coaches (Michelle Mc Donagh, Corby Mullins), credits the work of her senior co-captains Maddie Mc Donagh, Megan Cardiff and Sasha Schtein. "They have done great work on and off the court. They have shown the underclassmen how to behave, fo-



From left: Maile Nomura and Alex Bonardi (Campolindo)

cus and work hard. They have gone so far as organizing team dinners."

Freshman Eliza Bates has been the top player for the Dons. Says Jorgensen, "Eliza is a great competitor with a great mindset. She sees the court really well, hits the ball hard and is very consistent in her play."

If there was a positive side to the early season travails, it gave the coaches the opportunity to see the younger players put into unexpected pressure situations. Jorgensen saw the players take advantage of this opportunity. "Many of the girls developed immensely," she said. "Our lower level singles players got to compete against much tougher competition filling in for the missing starters and the backups stepped in for those girls as

well." Jorgensen highlighted sophomore Sophia Cooper and senior Olivia Reineke who went from doubles to play singles and "were a huge help for our team."

If there was a pleasant surprise this season, it was the play of freshman Jasmine Toni, who according to Jorgensen has shown "constant improvement and growth throughout the season. She is playing great."

With the week off due to the air quality issues, the Dons should be in even better shape as the season winds down.

Due to the bad air quality the Miramonte/Campolindo match last week was rescheduled and we were not able to take photos of Miramonte athletes.

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