

Lamorinda wrestling roundup

By Jon Kingdon



Lamorinda wrestling head coaches: Micah Canestaro (Acalanes), Jason Rosiak (Miramonte), and Louis Suba and Nikko Triggas (Campolindo). Photo provided

It's been a unique start of the season for the Lamorinda wrestling teams as it has been for every other sport. Due to the academic schedule, wrestling practice started two weeks early but with the smoke issues, none of the teams were able to practice much.

When Jason Rosiak took over as the head coach for the Miramonte wrestling team last year, he was the newest coach among the Lamorinda teams. With new head coaches at Acalanes and Campolindo, Rosiak has become the most experienced head coach.

In his initial year at Miramonte, it was Rosiak's goal to attract more wrestlers to the program. The difference this year, says Rosiak: "The team has a smarter coach. It's still a wrestling culture but it's now more inclusive. I'm setting goals for each person, using the sport as a learning tool for more than wrestling. Success on the mat is icing on the cake. I'm incorporating cardio work into the practices along with more weight training and honing into more specific moves for our squad – teach less, but go more into depth."

Despite having over 30 wrestlers on the squad this year (25 boys and eight girls), it's still a young team, says Rosiak: "There are not a lot of 3-4-5-year veterans but we are deeper this year. There are a lot of kids that are new to the team. They are creating their own culture and will be putting their stamp on Miramonte Wrestling. We will be able to fill 12 of the 14 weight classes this year."

With so many young wrestlers, Rosiak is relying on the captains to lead his team: Dylan Welch, a second-year sophomore who will be wrestling at 112-119; Andrew

Patten, who also runs cross country, a second-year junior who will be wrestling at 160; Ryan Edmister, a sophomore wrestling at 145; and Shannon Lipp, a junior in her second year of wrestling. Rosiak is looking for leadership from this group in many areas: "They are helping to make sure that the mental and physical well-being of the group is good. They are helping to run the practices as well. It's more than wrestling; it's gaining leadership skills and working with people by being respectful and responsible that will carry over to the real world. We have a lot of new wrestlers that are coming up to speed quickly."

There are various reasons why people are going out for wrestling. Benjamin Chin sees wrestling helping him with his football skills: "It will help me with my tackling, staying low and using my legs. It will help my endurance on the field. I'm enjoying learning the new moves and techniques."

Alexandra Finnegan, a sophomore in her first year of wrestling sees it helping her other main interest: dancing. "It really helps with my flexibility and agility and with my emotional aggression."

Rosiak takes great pride in having the second largest group of girls on his team in the league: "The girls stand toe to toe with the boys. It's empowering to see them working and striving together with the boys which builds up a large amount of respect for each other." Yahzee Mendez, a transfer from St. Patrick-St. Vincent's High School brings experience with her to the many freshmen on the team. The girls will be competing in at least five tournaments of their own this season.

Overall, Rosiak appreciates the attitude of his team: "I really enjoy the team's focus and how they really enjoy practicing. They want to learn."

With the retirement of Dave Ridge, Micah Canestaro was named the head coach at Acalanes after being an assistant for 10 years and he's learned it's a lot more than coaching: "It's a lot of administrative work. I'm the point of contact for everything – parents, the press, uniforms, a lot of paperwork besides continuing to manage practices and teaching techniques."

Having won their league the last two years, the Dons have moved up to a more difficult division that includes such traditional powers as Las Lomas, College Park, Benicia and Northgate.

Canestaro, who is from Boston and wrestled at Plymouth University, is excited about his team: "We have a really big group of young wrestlers. It's our largest freshman class in the past 10 years. It's great to have a lot of guys that are really excited to wrestle and roughhouse and are fast learners. My goal is to incorporate the technique with the wrestler's natural aggressive. It helps that we have a lot of good athletes."

Leading the team will be sophomore James Trainer, wrestling at 113, senior Addison Early wrestling at 182 and junior Steven Williams who transferred in from Campolindo wrestling at 152. The light weight division for Acalanes is made up of a number of freshmen. The Dons are still looking to fill some of the upper weight classes and may have to bump someone up to 195.

Canestaro is looking to build on the success that his predecessor

established: "I will be using a lot of Dave Ridge's techniques. We will work especially hard on getting our kids tougher through hard practices while making it fun for them as well. It's a fine line between difficult and enjoyable and we dance on that line."

The co-captains are Early, Williams, Tony Correa and Youssef Qteishat. Canestaro is counting on his captains to "lead by example with hard work in practice and in the dual meets. We are expecting wins from these wrestlers. Off the mat, we expect them to be good examples on campus and in the off season."

There are three girls on the team who are coached by Marty Martinez, Alex Haase, Corina McTigue and Abeagail Dunsmore, who won her weight class (143) last week.

Canestaro has no shortage of assistant coaches: "I have a great coaching staff with nine assistants. I've built a lot of relationships and I called upon all of them when I became the head coach and everybody agreed to help. They're not there every day but we always have at least five coaches at every practice. I'm very fortunate to have so many people to help us out."

When last year's head coach, Sam Sotello, moved away, Campolindo was able to promote from within. The Cougars have co-head coaches, Louis Suba and Nikko Triggas. Each brings Division I wrestling experience with Suba having wrestled at Indiana University and Triggas who wrestled at Ohio State and was a 3-time NCAA championship qualifier.

So far, it's been a very positive experience, says Suba: "It's working out great. We both love wrestling and want to pass it on to the next generation."

There has been a real growth in the number of participants in high school wrestling and each of the teams have found that exposing the students to the sport has prompted this growth, says Suba: "Nikko and I did a wrestling demonstration for the students, since most of them had never seen a high school or college wrestling match, to show them it is a controlled, non-violent aggressive sport that was both physically and mentally demanding. We have a core group of juniors and a lot of first year wrestlers that are showing some definite talent. They have the personality for the sport – aggressiveness and a willingness to learn. Some of the freshmen will be starting for us this year."

There are eight girls on the roster, double the number from last year. As with the other schools, the girls ask for and give no quarter, says Suba: "The same is expected of them as the boys. They don't do anything different. They wrestle against the boys in practice and are willing to compete in matches with the boys though there are separate girls tournaments as well."

Leading the girls is Madison Lee, wrestling at 132, who says Suba "is always there for us." Sophomore Juliana Meneses is returning from an injury that prevented her from wrestling last season. Says Suba appreciatively: "Though injured, Julianna never missed a practice and learned what she could be another of our leaders this year."

Two freshmen, Isabelle Lurie and Angie Warren, both new to wrestling, bring a unique skill set to the team. Warren has trained in boxing and Lurie has jujitsu experience. Lurie appreciates what she is getting from wrestling: "I've never been a fan of traditional sports. I love the combat and aggression in wrestling. I am really improving my strength and cardio fitness. Though I can't use most of my jujitsu techniques, the techniques in take downs I have learned in wrestling will help with my jujitsu."

With so many young wrestlers, the leadership of the upperclassmen is a crucial factor for the Cougars. Senior Nick Shaw, (182-195) and Jack Gruen (170) and juniors Adrian Bautista (120-126) and Noah Hammann (120) each bring a unique quality to the team says Suba: "Adrian has a real passion for the sport and wrestles all year round. Pound for pound, he is our strongest wrestler." Jack and his younger brother Sam have taken to teaching wrestling at Joaquin Moraga where their father is the PE teacher. Noah who finished third in the league tourney last year is another year-round wrestler and Nick has been a tremendous leader.

In a recent five dual meet, Bautista was 3-1, only losing to last year's NCS champion while Ethan Baxter was 4-1, pinning his opponent in each victory.

If there is one particular move that has become a favorite for Campolindo, it has been the arm bar, says Suba: "This move was essentially patented by Nikko which he used with great effectiveness in high school and college. He has put Campolindo's name on that move."

Campolindo loses to Bishop O'Dowd

By Jon Kingdon



Charlie Craig

Photos Gint Federas

In a game where Campolindo needed to play a mistake-free game Dec. 1 and didn't, the Cougars lost to Bishop O'Dowd by a score of 35-14.

Coming into the NCS semifinal

game with identical 10-2 records, the 3rd seeded Campolindo Cougars and the 2nd seeded Bishop O'Dowd Dragons seemed to be very evenly matched – Campolindo won their two prior playoff games by scores of 35-6 (vs. Redwood) and 49-14 (vs. Ukiah) while O'Dowd won their games by scores of 35-7 (vs. Hayward) and 49-14 (vs. Benicia). Both teams played Hayward earlier in the season, with Campolindo winning by 27 points and O'Dowd winning by 28 points.

Campolindo dug themselves a big hole early in the game with a fumble and interception on their first two possessions deep in their own territory, which O'Dowd converted into touchdowns, jumping to a quick 14-0 lead. Brandon Manty scored on a 32-yard fumble return for Campolindo, cutting the deficit in half, but O'Dowd answered that with a five-minute drive to go ahead 21-7 at the end of the first half.

After Campolindo stopped O'Dowd on their first drive, forcing a punt, the Cougars were anticipating getting the ball in good field po-

sition. However, there was a roughing the kicker penalty on Charlie Craig that allowed O'Dowd to keep the ball and finish off the drive with a touchdown to go ahead 28-7. With the score 35-7, Campolindo quarterback Grant Harper connected on a 60-yard touchdown to Max Schoenberger to make the final score 35-14.

Field position, long a strength for Campolindo, was very much in O'Dowd's favor. Campolindo averaged starting their drive on the 24-yard line while O'Dowd's starting average was the 44-yard line. Though the game was played under a sunny sky, the wind seemed to be a factor for Harper. Finishing the year with a 60 percent completion rate, against O'Dowd, Harper was only 11 for 33 for 199 yards. Still, Harper walked off the field with his head held high: "I loved playing with every one of our seniors. We fought together all year long. It is disappointing but we never gave up and that was our identity."

Campolindo finished the season with a 10-3 record, the eighth straight year the Cougars had at

least 10 wins. Macy praised the performance and attitude of his team: "We contained their top back, Austin Jones, never allowing him any big runs. We played hard and we have nothing to be ashamed

about. We never gave up. We gave a great effort every play. Our seniors advanced tremendously as a group and as individuals. It was an incredible year."



Grant Harper

Waterpolo

The postponement of the games was also a challenge for Campolindo. Senior Beck Jurasio spoke of the team's character after the victory: "We were a very close team and

came together as the season progressed. We had a lot of will power and we all wanted it so badly."

Campolindo head coach Miles Price arrived just in time for the

game, returning from a trip to Australia. During the hiatus he spoke highly of San Ramon Valley and the Cougars: "First, congratulations go out to San Ramon Valley

for the great season they had. We had great senior leadership that anchored our team from the start and we look forward to watching them continue to develop at the DI level.

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We have some special underclassmen who developed throughout the season and are excited to see what they are capable of in the years to come."