

LAMORINDA SPORTS

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Nick Safir named Miramonte's Head Football Coach

By Jon Kingdon

After twelve years as an assistant high school football coach, the last two as the defensive coordinator at Moreau Catholic (Hayward), Nick Safir was named the head coach at Miramonte High School.

After seeing the job listing, Safir jumped at the opportunity. "I sent in my application about 30 seconds after the job was posted," Safir said. "Growing up the Bay Area I know the excellence of Miramonte and it's athletics and I'm very excited for this opportunity."

Safir was an offensive lineman and middle linebacker at St. Mary's (Berkeley) High school and a linebacker and tight end at Linfield College, and is currently in his third year as a full-time teacher in the middle school in Hayward. "I've dedicated my life to mentoring youth," Safir said. "It really brings me a lot of joy to develop these young boys into young men."

Miramonte's athletic director Sean Hennessey

shared how Safir won him over. "First and foremost, he's an educator," Hennessey said. "Being a teacher really came across as a strong plus for Nick. He understands talking to students and student athletes and he stood out in every phase of what we're looking for."

Safir was an assistant coach at Piedmont and Encinal prior to Moreau Catholic. "Piedmont was most like Miramonte in that they prioritize academics as well as athletic excellence," Safir said.

Getting a head coaching position was something that Safir was pointing towards after graduating from Linfield. After coaching for five years at Piedmont, the next six years at Encinal and Moreau were key for Safir. "Coaching under Keith Minor at Encinal and Moreau really helped to develop me into the finer points of what it takes to be a head coach," Safir said.

Safir's family was

equally thrilled with his appointment. "My wife, Brianne (and their 1½ year old daughter Piper) and my sister are extremely excited for me because they know how long I've been working for this," Safir said. "When I told my dad, he told my mom to get out the good scotch. They live on the east coast now but they're going to be flying back for a few games."

Safir has already hit the ground running. "It starts in the offseason, and we've been getting in the weight room already," Safir said. "It's about coaching these kids hard and in the fundamentals. I'm excited for the challenge, but it's going to take a lot of effort and dedication from the kids. If they follow the program that we're setting out for them and if they take to the coaching, we'll be competitive with all of our opponents."

Just as important to Safir is putting his staff together. "We've got almost a complete staff

with about six or seven coaches on the varsity staff, some of whom were retained from the previous staff and then I have three or four guys on the JV staff and we're looking for freshmen staff because I think we're going to be able to have a freshman team this year."

Safir is well aware of the discrepancy in the team's head-to-head records against Campolindo, Acalanes, and Las Lomas. "I was pretty shocked to find out that Miramonte has not beaten Campolindo since 2010 since this was one of the most elite rivalries in the Bay Area and I think it still is, but you can't call it a rivalry if one side wins every single time," Safir said. "We want to compete with those teams because we think our program is on that level and I definitely recognize that as one of the issues that the community really wants to see."

Miramonte will be running a spread offense with the return of quar-

terback Carson Blair and wide receivers, Jack Quinnild (36/568), Andrew Bjornson (26/626), Preston Rguem (23/184) and Mitchell Reichenbach (15/185). "We're pretty excited about the receivers we have coming back and the young receivers we have coming up from the JV so we're going to do everything we can to get as many of those guys on the field but, we will have the flexibility go to two backs and to use a tight end if we need to."

Safir will be running a 4-2-5 scheme on defense "because we want to get more defensive backs on the field to cover the many schools that are using a spread offense so we're going to try and get more speed on the field."

In the end, it comes down to tackling and physicality for Safir. "My focus is going to be on changing the culture of the team in the secondary by tackling a lot more in practice," Safir said. "I want to make our opponents drive the field



Photo Ann Murphy

Nick Safir Miramonte Head Football Coach

and play against a really tough-nosed defense. With our conditioning program and the athletes that we have, we can wear those teams down on the defensive side of the ball."

This is going to be a non-stop job for Safir. "I'm well versed in how to make it work year-round, where we can work out, what we can push, how much of the time they're supposed to be at these practices and offseason lifts. We have a twelve-month plan and have come up with some great ideas for how we're going to develop our program."

Success and growth for Lamorinda Wrestling

By Jon Kingdon



Photo provided

Campolindo' Piper Lalli and Coach Phil Freeman

With a new beginning at Acalanes, continued growth at Miramonte, and a third straight season for a Campolindo wrestler to make it to the state tournament, it was a season to build on for the Lamorinda wrestling teams.

Campolindo

Campolindo head coach Phil Freeman has set a high bar for himself and for his team. "We had a pretty solid season that could have been better in some ways, but I think it was a solid year," Freeman said.

The Cougars were well represented at the DAL league tournament. Luke Hansen - first, Shane Harris - second, Emory Hsiao-146, Daniel Thaler - fifth, Emilio Penate - sixth, Jack Sim-

mons - sixth, with Harris, who had 27 pins this season, finishing in the top twelve at the North Coast sectional tournament.

"I think we'll do well next year," Freeman said. "Luke has a lot of leadership and Soushians Bahramifar (190) showed a lot of character, and he will be one of our leaders as well."

For the girls at the DAL, Piper Lalli came in first, Camila Baxter - second, K.T. Thompson - second, Ori Rogers - third, and Mailena Yang - fourth.

At the NCS, Lalli placed third, qualifying for the state championship. Baxter finished in seventh, Thompson and Patricia Davila Gil finished in the top 12

and the girls finished 13th overall out of 80 teams.

For Lalli, making it to state was the capstone to four years of wrestling for Campolindo.

"Wrestling has taught me so much about life," Lalli said. "When things got hard, I learned how to push through it. I've never done anything that's been more physically and mentally demanding and it definitely made me a stronger person, and I will take that work ethic forward, knowing what kind of mental strengths you can have and where that can take you."

At the CIF, Lalli did win the Pursuing Victory with Honor Award. "This award reflects the intangible qualities that Piper holds such as being a terrific team captain, having a great character and personality along with being so nice," Freeman said.

Acalanes

Leading the Acalanes boys was senior Dylan Potter (24-17), who had a solid season but came up short at NCS due to a knee injury. In his first season, sophomore Adam Caicedo (5-4) had limited time with the team due to the extended football season. "Adam finished in fourth at the league tournament, which was good

since he only had six weeks with the team, so I see that as a success," Nelson said.

Ian Sanftner, in only his second year, was a bright spot, finishing third at the league tournament but had a tough draw at NCS. "I expect Ian to come back with a new purpose next season," Nelson said. "Marley Oh is an absolute leader and is going to be a good wrestler, and Sam Whipple just missed making it to the NCS in a very tough 215 weight class."

The girls team was led by senior Dakota Goyert, who took seventh at the NCS tournament. "Dakota battled through some injuries midway through the season and I believe she is the first female medalist at Acalanes to place there which is a huge accomplishment," Nelson said.

Head Coach Steven Nelson felt it was a strong start for his first year at Acalanes. "When I was hired, I was told that we would be starting the season with six or seven kids and I ended up with 23 kids, so I would have to say that's a pretty big success," Nelson said. "The outlook for our team is nothing but good."

Miramonte

In just three seasons, Head Coach Louis Suba

has seen his roster of wrestlers grow from nine to almost 50 this year. "We're still a very young team considering 80% of our wrestlers are freshmen and sophomores," Suba said. "Most of our first-year wrestlers started the season without having ever seen a high school wrestling match before, so their learning curve was steep."

Owen Beideman, Finn Hura, and Brody Suba all qualified for the NCS championship. "These were three of our hardest workers with the most wins during the regular season, and wrestled against some of the toughest competition in Northern California," Head Coach Louis Suba said.

Hura, just a freshman, finished the season with a 31 and 14 record, winning a varsity tournament, took third at the DAL Championships, and won twice at NCS.

For the girls team, senior captain Izarra Ballesteros concluded her career with an eighth place medal at NCS. "That was an incredible accomplishment considering that she only started wrestling last year after transferring to Miramonte from a school that did not offer wrestling," Suba said. "She finished the season with a 20-8

record and had five first place medals in regular season tournaments, and won the DAL tournament, earning a first-team all-league honor."

Sophomore Claire Casado went from a winless freshman year to winning twenty matches this season, capturing six medals and finishing fourth at the DAL along with a victory at NCS. "Her improvement was astounding," Suba said. "She is a shining example of perseverance." Freshman Cayleigh Farrar won 19 of 30 matches prior to suffering a season ending injury.

Suba spoke for all wrestlers on what makes them such a special group of athletes: "Wrestling is a tough sport that's not for everyone. There's a greater chance of heartbreak than there is happiness, but the successful ones come back despite the pain that is just temporary. They go through a lot of adversity but that's how they build character. It's not about the wins and losses or the score at the end of the match. They grow through the struggle, building their confidence and inner strength. It's rewarding to see that transformation and that's what's most important."

2024 Oakland Diocese champs and west Diablo division CYO champs

Submitted by Neil Singh



Photo provided

The fourth grade CYO American team defeated St. Monica to win the CYO championship. By de-

feating Holy Rosary the team also won the Oakland Diocese championship.

Back row from left: coaches Kevin Vakil, Jeff Caulfield, Neil Singh; front row players: Joseph Maduck, Forrest Canoles, Shaan Vakil, Henry McShane, Ty Coy, Aiden Hennessey, Hyland Caulfield, Luca Lagrotteria, Will Bolger and Neil Singh

Seventh grade boys American League CYO champs

Submitted by Miyon Cosso



Photo provided

The seventh grade boys Catholic Youth Organization (American) St Perpetua basketball team from Lafayette won the league championship on Feb. 10.

The team won over the team of Christ the King of Pleasant Hill in the final game. The team went 9-1 this season.

Anthony Bishop, Luke Fishman, Tyler Cosso, Charlie Philips, Zenai Kaplans-Jones, Francesco Cangini, William Griffin, Samuel Spicer, Filippo Cangini