

THE Acorn

A work in progress

Coyotes must square off against juggernauts in Marmonte League

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GIRLS' SOCCER /// Calabasas Coyotes

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FINDING AN EDGE—Calabasas High girls' soccer freshman Sofia Flom, left, dribbles the ball against La Reina on Dec. 11 at CHS. Flom, Olivia Sulejmanagic and Kylie Kurzban are the only freshmen on varsity. Photos by RICHARD GILLARD/Acorn Newspapers

It's not a rebuilding year.

It's just a building year for Calabasas High's girls' soccer team, which has struggled to compete in a Marmonte League featuring juggernauts at Westlake, Oaks Christian and Newbury Park.

"Each year's the same," said Coyote head coach Brian Collins, now in his fifth season at the helm. "We still have a lot of players that are new to varsity that are still adapting to the varsity level. The speed and physicality of it, they've never seen anything like that.

"We're trying to figure things out. We're still a work in progress."

The Coyotes, who graduated 12 seniors last spring, haven't been at full strength in any match this season, but they've still managed a pair of victories and one draw through their first seven contests. Calabasas topped Shalhevet 5-0 in the season opener on Nov. 27 and defeated Notre

Dame Academy 2-0 on Dec. 6. The Pack battled neighbor Viewpoint to a 1-1 stalemate on Nov. 29.



Klara Wuertenberger

“With every game, we’re getting more

confidence,” said Sydney Zeto, a junior defender. “We have a strong team. We just need more confidence.”

Sophia Hetrick, McKayla Figueroa and Allison Flame are senior captains.

Hetrick starts at midfield. Figueroa, who has yet to suit up for a game due to an ankle injury, plays defense. Flame, a fourth-year varsity player, is a standout on the pitch and in the classroom. The senior forward maintains a 4.2 GPA. She’s president of the Never Again So Cal Club and she’s the student school board representative for the Las Virgenes Unified School District.

Dylan Parker, a junior midfielder, entered the week with two goals and two assists.

“She’s been our greatest threat so far this year,” the coach said of Parker. “She’s been playing multiple positions. She never comes off the field.”

Ella Nissimov and Samantha Yobs, both juniors, are starting defenders. Yobs has notched two goals this winter.

Brynn Bomberg, a third-year varsity junior, and Rachel Franklin, a junior in her first varsity season, compete for time at goalkeeper.

Calabasas received a boost when German foreign exchange student Klara Wuertenberger, a junior midfielder, arrived to the U.S. four months ago.

A Berlin native, Wuertenberger said “representing your high school and your community” is her favorite part of playing here.

Wuertenberger, who has played eight years of club soccer, said her high school in Germany doesn’t have its own team.

“I’m really happy to be here and be a part of the team,” she said.

Coyote underclassmen bolster the lineup.

Ellie Walters, a sophomore with two goals, and Olivia Sulejmanagic, a freshman who scored her first goal of the season in the season opener, bolster the attack at forward.

Shay Cohen and Alex Gomez, both sophomores, roam the midfield.

Natalie Chow and Emma Glasser, both sophomores, patrol the back line as starting defenders.

Parker, a 3.6 GPA student, pushes her younger teammates to play with effort and pride.

“We’re here for a reason,” Parker said. “We come out here and spend hours practicing. We have morning practices every Thursday morning on late days when we could be sleeping in. If you’re going to come out and put that much effort in, I think you should relay that into your game so we can get further as a team.”

Calabasas took a step in the right direction in a 4-1 loss in the rain against Oak Park on Dec. 17. After falling behind three goals in a sluggish first half, Collins challenged his players with a fiery halftime speech. The Coyotes responded with an energetic second half.

The Coyotes want to maintain the positive energy entering tonight’s showdown against Louisville, which is only one and a half miles away, at 6 p.m. at home.

“We’re always going to push ourselves,” Zeto said. “We’re always going to try.”

Flame said she wants to finish the season strong and leave a lasting legacy at Calabasas before going off to study public policy at one of the 17 colleges she applied to this year.

“We can change the culture of this program,” Flame said. “I really think this group of girls has the potential to do it. If we have the right mentality, we can win games and show all the schools we’re a good team.”

In a nutshell

Head coach

- Brian Collins (fifth season)

Senior captains

- Sophia Hetrick, MF/D
- McKayla Figueroa, D
- Allison Flame, F

Players to watch

- Dylan Parker, junior
- Ella Nissimov, junior
- Klara Wuertenberger, junior
- Sydney Zeto, junior
- Ellie Walters, soph.
- Olivia Sulejmanagic, fresh.
- Shay Cohen, soph.
- Alex Gomez, soph.

- Natalie Chow, soph.
- Emma Glasser, soph.

Record

- 2-4-1 overall

Next match

- Calabasas vs. Louisville,

6 tonight at CHS

Marmonte League opener

- Calabasas at Newbury Park,

6:15 p.m. Jan. 4