

# THE Acorn

## Coyotes' new era

Calabasas girls' soccer team finding identity with coach Brian Collins, staff

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CRUNCH—Calabasas midfielder Sarah Chamberlin gets wedged between Thousand Oaks players Nicole Prelooker, left, and Michelle Rodriguez. Chamberlin, a captain, will play soccer at West Point.

A new era has dawned at Calabasas High.

Brian Collins, the first-year head coach of the Coyote girls' soccer team, has shaken up the status quo.

"Brian has brought new life to our team," senior Talia Plachta said. "He's given us hope."

Calabasas entered this week with a 4-9-1 overall record, including 0-5-1 in the Marmonte League.

The Coyotes ended the week of January with a promising result, a 2-2 tie at Thousand Oaks on Jan. 30. The squad also earned a signature 3-1 win against Oak Park on Dec. 16 at home; Oak

Park, 14-3 overall, is one of the best teams in the area.

"We still keep pushing every game," Plachta said. "It's really enjoyable to have a team you love and a coach you love and to be pushed really hard."

At the center of this renovation project is Collins, who has coached the sport for 20 years.

The 1994 Newbury Park High graduate starred at striker for Cal Lutheran University. He coached various levels of Newbury Park boys' teams for 17 years, and he was Oak Park's boys' coach the past two seasons.

"I look forward to coming out every day and working with them," Collins said. "They all come to practice and work hard. We have four wins, but we're losing by one. We're competitive, but we're losing chances. We're kind of unlucky. We're playing well but not winning. It's frustrating to have that."

The coach isn't frustrated by the effort.

Calabasas has established an identity with a strong midfield in the 3-5-3 formation. Sarah Chamberlin, Siena Ereshena and Abbey Comstock fortify the middle.

Fans will have a chance to see how much the Coyotes have improved during the team's last home match of the season at 6:15 p.m. on Friday against Newbury Park.

Collins' first task as coach was to assemble a staff.

He brought in lead assistant Kaitlin Paletta and goalkeeper coach Ryann Torrero. Paletta, a 2008 Moorpark High graduate, played for the California Golden Bears. Torrero plays professionally in Switzerland. Nikki Berry, who suited up for the University of Pacific, Matt Gunary and former Coyote player Karen Levenberg boost the staff.

"Getting quality coaches is one of the most important parts of building a program," Collins said. "If you can show them, they'll buy in, rather than tell them."

Plachta, a center midfielder, said the coaches have improved the team's fitness.

"Running up and down the field is effortless to me," she said.

Plachta, who is one of 14 seniors, will be honored before Friday's game. She is also one of eight returning varsity players from the 2014 squad.

"It's going to be sad but eventful," Plachta said of Senior Night. "I may cry. It will be a good end to four years. This year stands out because of the brand-new leadership."

Plachta, an honors student, would like to attend UC Davis or UC Santa Cruz. She's a community outreach commissioner, and she enjoys painting and drawing in her free time. Her older sister Ari helped the Coyotes earn their last playoff berth in 2012.

Emily Lyon is a dynamic sophomore forward and outside midfielder.

Lyon, a second-year varsity standout, leads the Coyotes with eight goals.

"When she gets the ball, she makes good things happen," Collins said. "She's creative. She can hit the ball with either foot really well, and she has good instincts."

Lyon said the team has undergone a transformation.

"We're being inspired by a coach," she said. "I feel like I'm growing as a player. (Collins) is teaching us a new way to play soccer."

Lyon, an honors student with a 4.1 grade-point average, is active in peer support and plays the alto saxophone for the school jazz band. Her sister Katie is a freshman soccer player at Cleveland High.

The Coyote striker said she wants to help the seniors earn a Marmonte win before the season ends.

"I know we're capable," she said. "The seniors are working so hard."

Chamberlin provides physicality in the midfield.

The fourth-year varsity star, who shares the captain's band with Ereshena, will play soccer and enroll as a pre-med student at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. She'll major in biology and minor in neuroscience at Army; she wants to be a surgeon.

Chamberlin relishes her time with the Coyotes.

"There's a whole new energy," she said. "This whole group has so much heart."

"With K.P. (Paletta) and Brian as coaches, the whole program has a bright future."

Chamberlin said Senior Night will be bittersweet, but there's one goal in mind.

"I want to win more than anything," she said. "We want to end on a good note and leave Calabasas with a happy memory."

Chamberlin is active in Habitat for Humanity, Cookies for Kids Cancer club and the Wounded Warrior Project. She loves reading, writing and cooking.

Carlie James solidifies the Coyote defense and walks into practice with a smile on her face.

"Through the bad times and good times, we're still so positive with each other," James said. "Nothing would break our spirit."

James said she's looking forward to building the Coyotes into a consistent winner.

"The cool thing about the future is there's so much energy and so much love for the game," she said. "Everyone here wants to be here."

James, who has a 3.7 GPA, was a league champ in the 800-meter and 1,600 races in track and field last spring. She also enjoys playing the drums and guitar, and she's learning how to play the piano.

Kiley Lumley is a promising freshman forward/center midfielder.

"I'm learning to play better and faster with the seniors," she said.

Lumley has developed onfield chemistry with fellow striker Britni Ebert, a junior.

Ereshena is a skilled senior midfielder with strong vision and dribbling skills.

Comstock, a senior transfer from Texas, has fit in well with her new teammates. She's a physical player with deft touch on her long passes.

Sam Levy is a calm and composed sophomore outside back.

Alina Ahmed, who also plays tennis, is one of the most improved players. Ahmed is a senior goalie.

Courtney Jackson, Tess Stilman, Carley Fleishman, Destiny DeAlba, Andrea Korabi, Sophia Sorrentino, Nicole Khazaie, Ari Tylim and Jessica Afra are Calabasas seniors who will be honored on Friday.

Emily Adelman, Arbel Nagar, Cameron Raich, Julia Pedati, Cassidy Gibson and Megan Rich contribute for the Coyotes.

"I think the program's going to be awesome here," Paletta said. "They work so hard. I love watching them play."



'THIS IS MY BOOMSTICK!'—Calabasas High girls' soccer defender Carlie James kicks the ball during a 2-2 draw at Thousand Oaks last weekend. CHS plays at 6:15 p.m. on Friday at home against Newbury Park.

## ***Catch up with the Coyotes***

- **Head coach:** Brian Collins (first season)
- **Assistants:** Kaitlin Paletta, Ryann Torrero, Nikki Berry, Matt Gunary and Karen Levenberg
- **Captains:** Sarah Chamberlin and Siena Ereshena
- **Leading scorer:** Emily Lyon (eight goals)
- **Senior Night:** Calabasas vs. Newbury Park at 6:15 p.m. on Friday at CHS