

2008-09 Eagles Year in Review (Part II)

By Gregg McMullin

The El Segundo Eagles didn't win any CIF championships this year, but still the same they competed at a high level and were in the mix to win a ring. One coach celebrated a milestone, one team won their very first playoff game while another team reached the CIF semifinals for the first time, and there were some individuals who made appearances deep into the playoffs to put the Eagles on the map.

Girls' Soccer

The Lady Eagles completed their most successful season in school history going 19-5-1 on the year and advancing to the CIF semifinals. The Eagles started the year by winning six straight games and outscoring their opponents 34-4 in those games. But then they hit the skids going 0-3-1 in their next four games, including a 2-0 loss to Mira Costa. That game may have been the turning point in the season for the Eagles as they were absolutely nails the rest of the way aside from their 1-0 loss to South Torrance in Pioneer League play.

The Eagles went 9-1 in league play to capture their first league title since 2006 with great defensive efforts by All-South Bay defenders Courtney Hobbs and Halima Abdelshife. With the defense playing so well, that left the offensive threats of juniors Natalie Barbosa and Allison Reaser as well as sophomore Kayla Sanchez to pound in the goals as the Eagles outscored their Pioneer League opponents 50-6.

The Eagles went into the CIF playoffs as the number four seed and advanced to the semifinals with convincing wins over Brentwood, 2-1, Lakeside (Lake Elsinore), 3-2, and La Canada, 2-0. The Eagles played Valley Christian (Cerritos) on the road and had a 1-0 lead in the first half before giving up two goals and suffering a 2-1 defeat to the Crusaders. It marked the first time in school history that the Eagles' soccer program had advanced to CIF semifinals.

Boys' Volleyball

The Eagles just completed their season of volleyball and once again advanced to the CIF playoffs. The Eagles, who were led by junior outside hitter Hunter Hovland, beat Santiago 25-12, 25-20, and 25-21 in a CIF wild card playoff game. It marked the first postseason playoff game victory in the school's history. The Eagles advanced to play the top-seeded Downey Vikings. The Vikings, who went on to capture the CIF title, defeated the Eagles three games to one in the first round of the playoffs.

Hovland, just a junior, was the team's best offensive weapon. He was named to the All-Pioneer League and All-South Bay teams after averaging more than 20 kills per match for the Eagles.

Boys' Tennis

El Segundo's Andrew Stier was one of the Eagles' top singles players and then teamed up with Manuel Rodriguez to win the school's first Pioneer League doubles title in 10 years. The pair advanced to the CIF Southern Section quarterfinals; it was the first time a doubles team had advanced that far. Kenny Takimura and Justin Lee were another formidable team, but lost in the first round of the playoffs.

Swimming

El Segundo has a long and documented history of great swimmers and this year's group continued that tradition. Sophomores Jeff Allison and Ryan Makuta were absolutely stellar and both did well when they medaled at the CIF Finals. Allison peaked at the right time in the 100-yard backstroke when he took fifth (54.36) at the CIF Division III finals. Makuta had the best time of the year in the South Bay in the 200-yard freestyle at 1:42.31, which was good enough for second place at the CIF finals. He added a third place medal to his trophy case in the 100-yard freestyle with a time of 47.11.

The girls' team continued its success from the past much like its counterparts. Julianne Allison had another great year in the pool. All the junior did was win the 100-yard backstroke at the Pioneer League finals and place sixth at the CIF Division III finals. Sophomores Kelsey Cummings and Colette Gulick added to the success for the Eagles when Gulick won the Pioneer League's 100-yard breaststroke and Cummings had the South Bay's best times in the 200 and 500-yard freestyle. Both girls advanced and medaled at the CIF Division III finals and Masters meets.

Eagle swim co-coaches Fotis Davlantis and Jim Makuta were named South Bay Coaches of the Year for having the Eagles' swimmers peaking at the right time. The Eagles may have finished third in the Pioneer League, but all of the swimmers improved enough at the CIF Division III meet where the Eagles finished sixth--the highest of any South Bay school.

Softball

Two-time All-American Jenna Rich had another great year, and with her supporting cast including Indiana-bound Samantha Heyman, the Eagles were once again one of the top teams in the CIF Southern Section. The Stanford-bound Rich helped pitch and hit the Eagles to three tournament championships, the Pioneer League crown and into the CIF finals. The Eagles' 26 wins was the second most in the Southern Section this year and with 10 players returning next year, coach Keith Cameron should expect another winning season.

Baseball

Head baseball coach John Stevenson entered his 50th year making out the lineup card for the Eagles. With a strong group of seniors returning including UC Riverside-bound pitcher Ben Doucette, the Eagles were poised to have a breakout season. The Eagles started out 9-3 before the Easter break when they played three games in San Diego. Even though their bats were alive, they dropped two games in the tournament when their defense fell apart.

The Eagles sent sophomore right-hander Nigel Nootbaar to the mound against highly-touted Crescenta Valley, and together with Doucette, the pitching duo combined on a two-hitter. The Eagles won on the strength of Richard Seigel's pinch hit double and Justin McCullough's two-run homer. That game was one to help prepare El Segundo for their Pioneer League match-up with Torrance. The Tartars ended up sweeping the Eagles and the Eagles settled for second place.

In one Pioneer League game against Lawndale, something that has never been done in Eagle history was nearly accomplished. Nootbaar was cruising along and retired the first 20 batters he faced in order. He threw a 1-1 curveball up in the strike zone and it was hit cleanly between Grant Palmer at shortstop and Jake Booterbaugh at third base to break up an almost perfect game.

The Eagles (23-9), who were once ranked first in the CIF Division IV, dropped in the polls after their losses to Torrance. They faced Don Lugo (19-6) in the first round and came away with an easy 11-1 win. They traveled to fifth-ranked Palm Desert (22-5) and scored six first inning runs en route to a 6-4 victory. Joey Schaffhauser had a no-hitter through four innings before the heat got to him, and Doucette closed out the game. Against fourth-seeded San Dimas (24-5), the Eagles held four different leads during the game but bowed to the eventual CIF champions 11-8 in the quarterfinals.

It was a great year and the Eagles were competitive all year long. With plenty of talented juniors, sophomores and freshmen moving up to varsity teams next year, El Segundo athletics will once again be as highly spirited as this year's teams were.



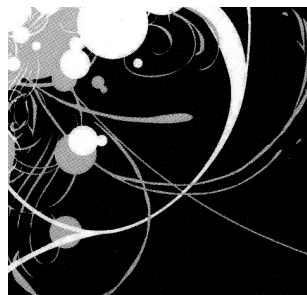
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