

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

FEBRUARY 2011

Special Ed Will Field a Track Team

By Daniela Solis
Staff Writer

Poly Special Ed teacher Alberto Flores has started a Special Ed track and field team.

"The kids are very excited," Flores said. "They can't wait to start."

Poly Athletic Director Kim McEwen added her approval.

"We've been trying to get a Special Ed team for years," McEwen said, "but we just couldn't find a coach for them. I'm happy that the kids have the opportunity to have a team, to have a sport"

Flores said helping the kids was his prime motivation

"Some kids have sports or band after school, other things to do," said Flores. "Our kids should have after-school activities too and do physical activity, do sports. It helps them both emotionally and physically."

Special Ed events will include the 100 meter dash, the 400 meter dash, the 400 meter relay, the long jump, the high jump, and the shot put.

The Special Ed team will have to meet all the same requirements as any other sports team.

"They need physicals, cooperative behavior and a point average of 2.0," said Assistant Principal April Hood.

Some exceptions are allowed, however.

"They are not limited by age," Hood said, "and they can participate if they are a new student."

Students with wheelchairs or walkers are not allowed to compete.

"The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), the organization in charge of high school sports, will only permit kids to participate who are able to perform on their own without any assistance," Hood said.

The team's first meet is scheduled for March 10 at Poly against Fairfax.

"Fairfax doesn't have a special ed track and field team," said Flores,

[See Special Ed, pg 3]



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

COACH: Special Ed's Alberto Flores will coach AA track team.



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

HONORED: Principal Gerardo Loera (right) and AP Ari Bennet will receive awards for their outstanding work at Polytechnic High School this year.

Loera Named LAUSD Principal of the Year

Ari Bennett awarded Assistant Principal honors.

By Armando Orozco
Staff Writer

Poly's Gerardo Loera and Ari Bennett were named principal and assistant principal of the year

by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) at an administrators' meeting in January.

"I believe this award is a reflection of the committed staff, teachers and students that Poly has had over the

years" said Principal Loera. "I am humbled by it."

Recipients are recognized and nominated by fellow educators for their commitment to the success and progress of their schools.

This is the first time that both Loera and Bennett have won the award.

Twenty-five awards are given in each of California's 19 regions. Administrators at all levels are

[See Loera, pg 3]

Parrots Get an Energy Lesson

That big blue building in the teachers' parking lot is buzzing.

By Jizel Emralino
Staff Writer

The Energy Lab, a 1300 sq. ft., fully mobile classroom filled with interactive learning tools, came to Poly recently as part of a nationwide initiative to raise student awareness in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Called the Mobile Learning Center (MLC), the Lab is sponsored by the National Guard.

"We are here to ignite interest among students about science," said



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

THEATER: A state-of-the-art 24-seat immersive theater is part of the high tech layout in the National Guard's "Energy Lab" visiting the Poly campus.

Nathan Linduski, a Mobile Learning Center Manager and educator. "We want to enlighten the students about the many opportunities in the field of energy and engineering."

The lab consists of four interactive exhibits - earth, water, fire, and wind - that are designed to raise awareness about existing and alternative methods of harnessing energy.

"The lab provides interactivity through video game-type technology," said Linduski. "The games run scenarios in which students learn about science and

Acadeca Makes Strong Effort

Parrot squad just misses state; Emralino scores 10 on 10 super quiz.

By Yenifer Rodriguez & Jizel Emralino
Staff Writer

Poly's 2011 Academic Decathlon squad narrowly missed advancing to the state competition for the second year running, coming in 12th.

"This team did an incredible job," said Parrot Acadeca veteran coach Brian Block, "studied harder, worked longer, and accomplished more in less time than any team in Poly history, and probably statewide, too."

The Parrot team needed 660 more points to top 11th place Van Nuys High's 38,665 points.

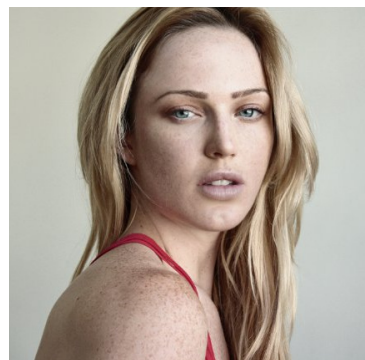
Granada Hill Charter took first place honors with 49,104 points.

The Highlander team and their four coaches will go on to compete in the 2011 California Academic Decathlon, scheduled March 12-13, in Sacramento. Since 1987, LAUSD has won 16 state competitions and 11 national titles.

Winners were announced at the LAUSD's annual Academic

Decathlon awards ceremony at Hollywood High School. Hundreds of decathletes, representing 64 high school teams in the District, attended and top scoring students were honored with individual medals and trophies for academic achievement.

[See Acadeca, pg 3]



Google Image

MTV: "Mad Men's" Caity Lotz will do her own stunts in "Death Valley."

MTV at Poly

"Death Valley" episode here.

By Stephen Castaneda
Staff Writer

There was action on Poly's baseball field Thursday night a couple weeks ago. But it wasn't the baseball team kicking up dirt. MTV had come to film a scene for its new Series, "Death Valley."

The horror-comedy features a special police unit called the Undead Task Force (UTF) assigned to kill the zombies, werewolves and vampires that are overrunning the Valley.

The 12-episode series stars Caity Lotz from "Mad Men," Tania Raymonde from "Lost" and Charlie Sanders from "Big Dog."

Series location manager Stephen Andrzejewski looked at many different campuses and liked Poly's the most

Film L.A., a private, nonprofit organization that coordinates and

[See MTV, pg 3]



Google Image

Shakespeare Goes Ceramic

Garden setting for "Gnomeo and Juliet"

CINEMA - page 4



Google Image

Portman is Compelling

"Black Swan" star wins Best Actress award.

CINEMA - page 4

OPINION

EDITORIAL



Putting the Book in Facebook
Can networking be educational?

Both teens and teachers in Greenwood High and Warren Central High in Warren County, Kentucky are making use of their time during snow days doing assignments and having class discussions on Facebook.

“It’s our way of staying in class even when we’re not in school,” said Sarah Halcomb, a 15 year old AP European History student.

Ironically, some teachers are using Facebook, the latest internet distraction from school work, as a tool for education.

For example, Greenwood High has its own AP Facebook profile page.

The profile’s basic info category reads, “This group will be used for help on confusing assignments and the keep a record of what we have assigned. Do NOT post all the answers. This is to help

you reach your potential in class, not for you to cheat.”

Students in overcrowded classrooms who can’t get enough help from their teacher can now have group discussions on Facebook to better understand the work.

Teachers found the Facebook connection effective in preparing students for Advanced Placement tests with national test dates that can’t be moved.

Teachers can set an assignment in the morning, (essays, quizzes, online “home” work, and even tests) and create a deadline for online completion.

Internet access is mandatory for these online classes, of course,. Students without are expected to go to libraries, a friend’s house, or simply anywhere with Wifi to do their work.

Warren County teachers agree this type of class work is a useful preparation for the

students, since college work is similar.

Teachers from Warren County’s two high schools use Facebook to collaborate on the best way to explain their curriculum.

Other Facebook applications might include an increase in electives that would only need an online boost and communication between teachers and students.

Classes might even be shorter because some course work can be covered online on Facebook.

Facebook certainly has the potential to solve many problems because of the number of students and teachers already with profiles.

The site might even help lessen the impact of budget cuts by providing learning opportunities without actual classrooms.

OP-ED

DENISE ACOSTA

Familiar Pattern
Are newly elected Republican governors setting up an ideological battle in 2012?

Imagine public schools throughout the state...closed! Although many students squirm with delight at the thought of such a turn of events, the community knows this as a sign of unrest.

In Wisconsin, citizens wish they could close their eyes to the harsh reality of political chaos. Teachers, among other union workers, have been forced to confront the nightmare created by new Republican governor Scott Walker.

More than 20,000 protesters swarmed the state capitol last week to denounce the governor’s scheme to take away collective bargaining rights from most public sector unions. The unions are historical pillars of Democracy. By taking away their bargaining rights, Walker is essentially decreasing the influence of Democracy.

Ironically, in 1959, Wisconsin was the first state in the nation to give all public-sector workers collective bargaining rights. Today, however, Republicans support Governor Walker’s decision, declaring the unions representing teachers, welfare workers, and other state and local employees have grown excessively strong and inflated pay and pensions across the country. They consider this the foundation for the nation’s fiscal crisis.

The Wisconsin governor claims to be balancing the state’s budget. But fifteen school districts closed due to protesting teachers and

critics claim Walker is “directly assaulting organized labor.” Walker, meanwhile, seems to overlook the possibility that there is a problem.

Democratic lawmakers fled the state, denying the possibility of a majority needed to pass the bill. Indeed, all 14 Democratic senators fled, leaving Republicans one senator short of a quorum. With no other choice, the Senate adjourned without debating the bill.

Governors from Iowa and Michigan are contemplating following in Governor Walker’s steps.

A pattern seems to be emerging. Across the United States, new Republican governors are demanding their legislatures enact extremely strict fiscal policies. Many of their decisions to drastically decrease government spending have so far had unexpected and severe outcomes.

Since President Obama’s election, Republicans have stealthily planned their 2012 comeback. They seem to be willing to do anything to prevent Obama’s reelection. The current policy gridlock between the Republican House of Representatives and the Democratic Senate is just one example.

Republican governors’ hasty and ill-conceived fiscal policies at the state level suggest that the nation could be in store for more of the same at the national level in 2012. The potential for even more divisive and contentious politics ahead is growing.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear OPTIMIST:

I just read the December edition of the OPTIMIST and discovered that four students from Poly made finalist in the QuestBridge National College Match Program. As a former applicant who didn’t even make finalist status I am thrilled to know that not one but four of our successors in the class of 2011 have gone so far and I would like to offer them my congratulations for their accomplishments. I’m sure you and the OPTIMIST staff be in contact with them through the end of their senior so I hope you can please do me the favor of tell them this for me.


As my mentor and friend Jin Lee told me on several occasions, it’s not about the cards you’re dealt -- it’s about how you play your hand. These four finalists played their cards superbly and have been dealt an amazing opportunity in turn. As long as they continue to persist they will go far no matter what the obstacles and setbacks they are faced with. And while planning ahead is typically considered a good idea, the future may not always be what you predict it to be, so I will instead say that the wise person steers according to the changing playing field they are faced with.

Getting admitted to a university IS NOT THE FINISH LINE. The work continues and resolve and effort is still required of you, more so than ever before. (I was actually doing my Chemistry homework right now until I got distracted and read the December edition of the OPTIMIST) Things are what you make of them and so I hope that the class of 2011 and the generations yet to come can make the best of the hand they are dealt.

In an insignificant world that will eventually wipe away every legacy left behind after countless ages, we should celebrate the day to day struggles and personal victories, the moments shared with loved ones that make living worthwhile, those are the significant things. But our current world doesn’t let life be as simple and clean as it should be. In order to have that comfortable life you need to go through school (according to the government) and get a career (according to most of the job market) for money to support yourself and family.

That’s what is demanded in our world and we can do little more than give our all to meet those demands. But one shouldn’t lose themselves in the strife towards meeting the demands of the world. The past should be kept in mind to help steer the present so the future may be met with a resolute will to make things the way you want them to be for yourself and the people you love.

Marvin Martinez, Poly ‘10



the
OPTIMIST

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School
12431 Roscoe Blvd, Sun Valley, CA, 91352
<http://polyhigh.org>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor must be typed or printed in ink and include the writer’s signature. The OPTIMIST reserves the right to edit submissions. Send letters to Rm.14 or Mr. Blau’s box.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The OPTIMIST is the voice of the Poly community, and follows the Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists. Editorials are the opinions of the staff.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Joel Hinojosa

SPORTS EDITOR
Kelsey Cruz

PHOTO EDITORS
Alejandro Cadena
Mariana Santos

WRITERS
Denise Acosta
Stephen Castaneda
Jizel Emralino
Ivan Escobedo
Armando Orozco
Yenifer Rodriguez
Daniela Solis

OPTIMIST ADVISOR
John Blau

NEWS



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

ACADECA: From left: Seniors Quenten Millhauser and Jizel Emralino and coach Brian Block.

Acadeca Misses

[From Acadeca, pg 1]

In the academic decathlon competition, each school team is comprised of nine students—three students from three different grade-point average (GPA) categories—Varsity (2.99 GPA and below), Scholastic (3.00-3.74 GPA) and Honor (3.75 and above GPA).

The 10-quiz competition involved speech, interviews (prepared and impromptu), essay, art, economics, language and literature, mathematics, music, social science and a “Super Quiz” written and oral relay. The total score of all 10 quizzes determines the 2011 winner.

This year’s study topic was “The Great Depression.”

Despite missing the cut, Poly’s 2011 Acadeca squad put up many respectable numbers.

The three varsity students, two juniors and one sophomore (GPA 2.0 to 2.99) scored over 1700 points combined on their essays. This is higher than last years scholastics (GPA 3.0 to 3.75), who were all seniors, and went to UCLA, UCLA and UC Berkeley.

Poly finished in the top three (and earned a plaque) for the first time in any category, this time for speech. This year’s team received five medals for speech, also a record, besting last year’s four speech medals.

Poly had never won more than four medals total in a single competition until three years ago. The team scored 8 medals in 2009, 12 last year and 8 this time.

The 2011 competition was harder than last year. Scores around the nation were about 2,000 points lower than last year.

This year’s team was superior to last year’s team in several categories. Even with the more difficult exam, this year’s team scored 813 points higher on the combined speech/interview/essay totals and 885 points higher on mathematics.

About half of the Academic Decathlon exam is the same as the previous year. The basics of math, economics, art and music do not change, and neither does the criteria for speeches and interviews. As a result, a team with several “returning” members has a great advantage in going to state.

Poly only had two returning members on its team. Other coaches refer to this type of year as a “rebuilding year,” because it is so hard to learn the entire curriculum in just a few months.

To gain an advantage, many top teams have their students take classes before making the team. One school has an “honors humanities” class, where students learn the basics, and a “junior varsity” academic decathlon class. Only the best are then chosen from this class for the honor of working long honors after school.

Many top teams also have more than one coach. Granada Hills and Marshall have 3 or 4 primary coaches and bringing in specialists as well.

San Fernando, the winning team in Poly’s

conference, had eight returning members from last year. The Parrot team had two.

The state competition can be easier than the district competition. Every California county winner is guaranteed a spot regardless of their score. Last year’s Parrot team won 12 medals in the district competition and 22 more at State.

The LAUSD competition is so tough that a team that finishes twelfth usually has enough points to take first place in many states.

Individual Parrot performances

Jizel Emralino – Team captain and highest scorer on the team. In a year where individual scores dropped about 350 points from the previous year, her scores went up 350 points.

Denise Acosta – Medalist for her speech on balancing Acadeca with being a cheerleader and Senior class vice-president.

Maverick Santos - Second highest overall score on the team. His speech score was also the second highest on the team.

Quenten Millhauser - Won medals for speech and interview. His speech was a sentimental tale of how his parents first met. Highest Scholastic scorer.

Oscar Cordova - Narrowly missed winning medals for outstanding scores in Social Science and Interview.

Rafael Cordova -- “Last” member to join the team. Came on as a “dare” -- thought that he could outscore his brother. Lost – but not by much.

Kayle Sicairos – Top speech score on the team for her speech on her love for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Antonio Rodriguez – Highest Varsity scorer. Won a medal on his speech detailing the conflict between good and evil.

Luis Miranda - Had the highest scoring essay of any varsity or scholastic student in the past two years.

Parrots Get Energy Lab

[From Lab, pg 1]

The “Energy Town,” centerpiece of the Energy Lab, is a representation of a typical city with business buildings, factories and residences.

“The Energy town is a geographical representation which shows the different types of energy through different colored lights: blue for water, white for wind, red for solar, and green for earth,” said Linduski.

The lab encourages students to pursue a career in the energy field.

“There are many vacant jobs in the science and technology fields, but not a lot of people have the qualifications for the jobs,” said Linduski. “Most are engineering jobs that focus on the renewal of energy.”

The “Earth” station contains three interactive computers where students extract oil, coal, and natural gas to produce electrical energy.

“The activity teaches the students how to maximize production in an efficient manner,” said Linduski.

The “Wind” section contains a large touch-screen table. Students locate different turbines where they can gain the most energy.

The “Water” section shows students the different types of waves and the locations optimal for harnessing wave energy.

“It shows how buoys gather energy from the ocean waves,” said Linduski.

The “Fire” station challenges students to capture solar energy to power as many homes as possible.

“Enough sunlight falls on earth’s surface each minute to meet world energy demand for an entire year,” said Kevin Baron, the Senior Production Manager of The Energy Lab.

The Energy Lab directs students to careers that would benefit the community in the long run.

The feedback from the students, teachers and parents has been very positive.

“It is fun and exciting,” said Junior Yecenia Cid.

The Lab combines education with students having fun.

“It’s not boring,” said Arguta. “The Energy Lab makes learning more fun because it’s interactive.”

Poly is currently the only school in California scheduled for an Energy Lab visit.

Special Ed Track & Field

[From Special Ed, pg 1]

“so we’ll just run on our own.”

Flores, who ran track and cross country in high school, was an assistant coach for an AA track team for the past five years.

“I ran a marathon at Mission Bay San Diego in 1978. I ran the mile and the 2 mile in high school.”

Flores got encouragement to start the Special Ed team from another staff member.

“I had been asking around school if Poly had an AA track team for Special Ed,” Flores said, “and coach Jeff Ring told me that I should start one, so I said okay.”

So far the paper work has been the hardest part, Flores said.

“There is lot of paperwork, since the students are academically challenged,” said Flores. “We have to help them, we have to do the paper work for them since they can’t do it on their own, and we call the parents and let them know.”

Athletic director Kim McEwen will have more paperwork too

“Just a little more work,” McEwen said. ”It’s just like any new team. The paperwork, it’s nothing. It’s just like any other team we have on campus”

The meets will longer, McEwen said, since more athletes will compete.

Flores has 12 students on the team, but so far only three have been cleared.

Flores will get help from said three Special Ed staff members and volunteers.

Training will start on February 28.

Principal Award

[From Loera, pg 1]

eligible, from the superintendent to the special-ed coordinator.

“I am proud of the school and the achievements of the school” said Assistant Principal Bennett. “This award may be honoring Loera and me, but it is really for Poly and the increased success as a school.”

Loera and Bennett will receive their awards at the annual Administrators of the Year awards banquet at the Casa Italiana Restaurant in Los Angeles on May 5.

“This year’s ceremony theme is ‘Leadership Matters,’” said Loera. “Lucky for us Poly is blessed with strong leaders.”

SUDOKU February 2011

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December 2010 Solution

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2	6	7	3	5	9	4	1	8

MTV shoot on campus

[From MTV, pg 1]

processes permits for on-location motion pictures and television shows, was the go-between for MTV, getting clearance from LAUSD to film at Poly.

Andrzejewski contacted Poly Assistant Principal Elidia Vasquez three weeks ahead of filming to confirm an acceptable date for the shoot.

MTV had Wicks St. closed for shoot. They

hired LAPD to arrive at 7 am to secure the premises. The actual filming crew arrived at 2 p.m. to setup equipment on the football field and the filming started shooting mostly on the baseball field from 7 p.m. through 7:30 a.m.

The community was notified that MTV was filming because weapons were involved.

MTV is scheduled to return to Poly during spring break to shoot more scenes.

“Death Valley” will air on MTV sometime during the summer.

CINEMA



PORTMAN TRIUMPHS IN ‘BLACK SWAN’

Actress brings to life the compelling and terrifying world of a New York ballet dancer.

By Ivan Escobedo
Staff Writer

Rating Guide: 4.9/5

As was widely expected, Natalie Portman received the Best Actress Oscar for her performance in “Black Swan” at the 83rd Annual Academy Awards held Sunday in Hollywood’s Kodak Theatre.

The Academy clearly appreciated her physically demanding and dramatic performance. Portman lost 20 pounds and took ballet training for over a year and a half for the role.

Portman’s tearful acceptance speech included a thanks to her parents and friends “who mean everything” to her as well as director Darren Aronofsky for being “a fearless leader and visionary.”

The 29-year old actress has also won several awards this season for her “Swan” role, including the Golden Globe, the Screen Actors Guild award and the Independent Spirit Award.

The film, a terrifying and compelling look at the world of New York ballet dancers, took its toll on the actress.

“‘Black Swan’ is going to affect me for years,” Portman said.

At “Swan’s” center is Nina Sayers (Portman), a fragile, naive, and vulnerable young ballet dancer whose life collapses around her as she struggles with the

psychological demands of her star role in Tchaikovsky’s 19th century masterpiece “Swan Lake.”

Sayers, the ideal and innocent white swan, must fully embody the seductively evil black swan for the play.

The darker half of Sayers gradually surfaces as she prepares for the role of her life, paranoia, delusion and sexual awakening ending her adolescence.

The innocent protagonist is lost forever as Sayers transforms herself at the cost of someone’s life, a powerful statement from director Aronofsky.

Fellow dancer Lily (Mila Kunis, “The Book of Eli”) tries to help Sayers relax, but Nina is convinced that Lily wants to steal her role.

The overprotective mother, Erica, annoys Nina by always worrying about her eating habits and over-extended practice sessions.

The production’s ballet instructor, Thomas Leroy, sexually assaults Sayers during her practice, thinking his actions will improve her role as a seductress.

“Swan” was nominated for five Oscars, including best picture and best director, but Portman was the film’s only winner.

The \$13M film has already made over \$103 million dollars and will be on DVD and Blu-Ray March 29th.

The psychological thriller is rated R.



Google Image

GNOME LOVE: From left: Shroom, Juliet (Emily Blunt) and Gnomeo (James McAvoy), the lovers, and Spanish accented plastic flamingo, Featherstone (Jim Cummings).

Bard of the Garden

Love blooms against all odds in this lively tale of ceramic romance based on Shakespeare’s play.

By Joel Hinojosa
Editor in Chief

Rating Guide: 3.5/5

Director Kelly Asbury’s “Gnomeo and Juliet” is a fun kiddish comedy take on a Shakespeare play about two crossed lovers, Gnomeo (James McAvoy) and Juliet (Emily Blunt), in a world of ceramic garden gnomes.

Like Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet,” family hostilities between the Reds, owned by gardener Mr. Capulet, and the Blues, owned by gardener Miss Montague, provide the backdrop for the gnomes’ antics. Capulet and Montague are neighbors at odds over who will have the most extravagant gardens.

The gnomes come to life when the humans are away. For entertainment and competition, the gnomes have lawn-mower derbies.

Lord Redbrick (Michael Caine) keeps daughter Juliet secluded on her castle and Gnomeo’s mother Lady Blueberry (Maggie Smith) hassles him with family problems.

Gnomeo and Juliet meet under the night sky and in the presence of a heart-shaped flower and fall in love.

The 3D doesn’t add to the experience of the film. There aren’t many pop out scenes and the 3D tends to blend in like a 2D movie.

Elton John’s music complements the whimsical characters, including Juliet’s tough cousin Tybalt (Jason Statham), frog ornament and romantic Nanette (Ashley Jensen), and Spanish accented pink flamingo Featherstone (Jim Cummings), whose story of courtship outdoes Gnomeo and Juliet’s.

“Gnomeo and Juliet,” though not Disney’s best, is still worth watching, and unlike Shakespeare’s drama, this one has a happy ending.

TECH TALK - JOEL HINOJOSA

New Sony Portable Steals the Spotlight

Sony unveiled a new handheld aimed at hardcore gamers.

The new Sony NGP (Next Generation Portable) handheld that embraces the same graphics as the PS3 (Playstation 3), is causing hardcore gamers to drool.

Originally, the spotlight was on Nintendo, who is expected to release the Nintendo 3DS, a portable game console which utilizes 3D without spectacles, on March 27. But Sony has been the talk of gaming news sources.

Aside from the high quality graphics, the Sony device has a built in 5 inch touch screen, rear touchpad, and the first integrated double analog sticks. The NGP’s resolution is 960 x 544 pixels.

The NGP supports 3G, WiFi and GPS connectivity. The device also features a built-in six axis motion sensor and a three-axis compass. Front and rear cameras with microphone are built-in as well.

PS3 console games, such as Uncharted, a game of adventure with striking graphics, Call of Duty, a major hardcore and multiplayer shooter franchise and Metal Gear Solid 4, a spy and shooter game with stunning visuals, will be available in the NGP format.

“Activision talked about Call of Duty and that’s a very big thing for NGP,”

said Kazuo Hirai President & Group CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc.

New software called PlayStation Suite will act like Apple’s App Store for games from independent or third party developers.

No actual release date for



the NGP has been disclosed, but the device is expected for the holiday season. No price has been announced.

SPORTS

INTERVIEW

Poly Gets New Coach
Former Cleveland JV coach will helm Parrot varsity football squad, replacing Scott Faer.

By Kelsey Cruz
Sports Editor

The OPTIMIST spoke with newly-hired varsity football coach Joseph Pierro last week. Here’s what he said.

Q. Why did you want the Poly coaching job and what qualities can you bring to the program that other candidates couldn’t?

I had a lot of opportunities this off-season to take over programs. When I first interviewed for this job, it was like meeting a girl who you really liked, and you only hoped that she liked you back. It felt like family from the second I was introduced to the panel. What separated me from the other candidates, I’m going to receive more joy for my players graduating with honors than making all-league as a football player.

Q. Tell us about your plans for assistant coaches.

We’ll have eight assistant coaches on Varsity, and five on Junior Varsity. There will be a quarterback coach, Offensive Line coach, Wide receiver coach, Running back coach, a Defensive Line coach, Linebacker coach, Defensive back coach, Special teams coach, Defensive coordinator and an Offensive coordinator. Obviously a few of the coaches will double up as coordinators.

Q. Tell us about your prior coaching responsibilities. What were your assignments, what schools did you coach at and how long were you at each school?

I coached at Birmingham for three years as a Defensive Assistant/ Defensive Coordinator and at Cleveland as a Defensive Coordinator/ JV Head Coach/Varsity Quarterback coach for the last three years. I will be the Offensive Coordinator and Quarterback coach at Poly.

Q. Talk about your football career. When did you start playing football, what position(s) did you play and where and when - high school? college?

I started playing football in the 5th grade in Clovis for Dry Creek Elementary as a running back. I played for two years at Kastner Intermediate as a Running back/Defensive Back and four years as a Running back/ Defensive back at Clovis West High School (1991).

I started my college career at Fresno City College, playing two years as a Strong Safety/ Linebacker. I earned a scholarship to Cal State Northridge as a linebacker and earned all-conference honors.

Q. Give us some background on where you were born and grew up and if you’ve done anything besides coaching.

I was born and raised in Fresno. After college, I was a UPS driver, a driver for Sparkletts, a real estate broker and a painter for the City Of Los Angeles.

Q. Are you interviewing assistant coaches?

So far, I have seven coaches ready to go. I’m holding open five positions for former staff, alumni, and Pop Warner Falcon coaches. There are NO restrictions on how many coaches I hire to be a Parrot. These coaches’ responsibilities are simple - help repair the perception of POLY football through expert preparation.

Q. A walk-on coach has additional challenges because he is not on campus or a part of most school activities. How will you meet these challenges and become part of the Poly community?

One of the first things that I did was give my



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

FOOTBALL: *New hire Joseph Pierro will take over Poly’s football program in the fall.*

Facebook and contact info to my players. I’ve been told that twitter maybe the easiest way for all the community to follow our team, so that is next. I have great flexibility with my job, I will be at all pep rallies and make my presence felt through out our community thru appearances, football camps etc.

Q. How much time does your day job consume? How much time every week do you expect to devote to coaching Poly football?

My day starts at 5 am every morning, and is completed by 2 pm, leaving me ample time to coach my team. Each day our practices will run an average of four hours.

Q. How will you measure your success this year?

Well I did not come here to be an average coach, or run an average program. I fully expect Poly to not only win a championship this year, but to break multiple offensive and defensive records on the way.

Q. Is your first priority offense or defense?

I don’t treat one aspect of our team with a priority. If our or Offense, Defense, and Special teams are not on ONE accord, I’m not doing my job. So you’ll never see me focusing on any of these three more than the other.

Q. For the last four years, Poly has succeeded largely with a running game and grind-it-out offense. What changes, if any, will you make?

Coach Faer has done a great job creating a running game bully in the East Valley. My job is to incorporate that mentality into our wide open, multiple set, multiple play offense. We’re going to look a lot like the University of Oregon.

Q. Talk a little bit about the main differences between football at the high school level versus college football.

In college you’re able to spend double the time with your kids. Everyone was an all-American or the best player in their town, so everyone is the biggest, fastest, and strongest student athlete you’ve ever seen.

Q. How much of high school football is strategy and execution and how much is just the desire to win?

I feel it’s a healthy blend of the two, something like 80% preparation 20% desire. If we don’t go above and beyond the call of duty with preparation for our opponents, all the desire in the world will get us just that, just the desire to win instead of defeating our opponent through preparation, knowing that we’ve outworked them before we touch the field.

Q. Will you coach to the skills of the players you have or will you expect the players to adapt to your system? Please give us some examples of how you plan to do that.

Our players have no option, they have to adapt and buy into our system. Now how our players react with a new system, a new philosophy, and new coaches will decide how much of our playbook we will run with our student athletes.

Q. Who is your contact with Poly’s administration and what are the expectations of Poly’s administration for you? How specific have they been in terms of what they expect and how they want you to coach? Please be specific.

14. For now I’m working hand and hand Ms. McEwen, and Mr. Loera. Though there are countless other support staff that I will be leaning heavily on. Their expectations from me are to change the perception of Poly players by running a clean, well-run organization through discipline.

Q. Tell us what kind of offense you plan to run and what kind of defense. Is there a current high school or college football team that you would model either your offense or defense after?

This question was answered offensively already. On defense we’ll be running multiple sets, with our base a three/four. Somewhat modeled after USC

Q. Tell us your plans for Poly’s football team between now and the first game in September.

My plans are to now install my system as quickly and efficiently as possible so that we can achieve all of our goals.

Q. Briefly describe your coaching philosophy. Are you a gambler, a risk taker or a by-the-book coach who relies on statistics and past experience?

I consider my philosophy of that simple, a risk taker until it absolutely does not work. Then I’m by the book.

Q. Will stats be available after the game for the press?

We will have a full time stat person on the sidelines who will have all stats ready for the press and myself by game’s end.

Q. It’s fourth down for Poly late in the fourth and you’re down by four. What play do you call and why?

I have a group of special plays that I set aside for these occasions, and we’ll run the one that we’ve mastered and the players feel most comfortable with.

SPORTS

Soccer Girls Lose Playoff Thriller

The OPTIMIST spoke with newly-hired varsity soccer coach Jose Alvarez last week about the playoffs. Here’s what he said.

By Daniela Solis
Staff Writer

THE PLAYOFFS

One of the most intense games Poly has ever played.

Eagle Rock was a really good team. Since our girls never been to playoffs, I saw how nervous the team was. Just as we arrived to the school, the girls had a look in their eyes that said it all - they were nervous. We got early to Eagle Rock High, so we warmed up, stretched and focused on the game.

I met the coach from Eagle Rock. We talked and we shared about how our season went. Once we seen the officials show up, we knew it was game time.

I called the girls in for a huddle. We got down in one knee. We had our prayer for a safe game and once we got up I got in the middle of that huddle and I asked the girls “who wants to go home?” They all shouted ‘No one!’ I gave them what I thought was not going to be my final speech or pep talk. I said “ladies, when you are out there on the soccer field playing, nothing else matters. It’s like the whole world has disappeared, and you and your teammates are all that matters. So this is your time! Now go out there and take it!

Poly fought such a intense game the first half the ball was going back and forth we made mistakes and we corrected them. Eagle Rock made mistakes and corrected themselves.

First point Eagle Rock. One of our defenders was beat on the right side, so Eagle Rock shot and our goal keeper Stephanie Romo, our veteran senior player, had one get through.

We continued. I let the girls know “Don’t worry about the score, it’s 0 to 0, keep playing.”

So we did. So intense. Eagle Rock scored off a free kick 2 to 0.

Halftime, I had to motivate the girls, so I told them “victory isn’t defined by wins or losses, it is defined by effort. If you can truthfully say I did the best I could, I gave everything I had, then you’re a winner. When you step on that field, knowing that everything you worked for comes down to one game, you get that realization: this is what it’s all about, and this is why the game was made.”

Once again I said out loud “who wants to go home?” The entire field echoed “NO ONE!”

I screamed “ladies, what do we want?” Out loud, our girls screamed “RESPECT!” Let’s make history.

We fought a tough game. It seem at one point the refs were not giving us a break. So many bad calls.

But in the end, the girls gave it everything. The score was 3 to 0, but people who were there watching the game said it was one of the best games ever played by these girls. Even the other coach said I don’t know what you said to them coach, but Poly came back stronger and faster. I was proud of my team, very proud of the girls.

THE SEASON

Q. What goals did you set for the team this season and how well did the team do?

Number one was “respect.” It’s very important to respect themselves, the team and all others around you. I have coached teams in the past and it’s very important to respect the team and each others just because I felt women’s soccer has never gotten much respect since it’s a female sport.

So my goal was more like a strong statement since I’m the new coach I want the girls to get and earn respect and what better way to earn respect than by winning and proving to the school and every student that the girls can do it all.

Women’s soccer is a tough sport. Not everybody can play and it’s very competitive.

Trust was a second goal. To trust me and each other as a team, playing together as a team and having trust is very important. You can just join a sport and make best friends. It’s a great learning experience and trust is a very big goal.

Q. Talk about two or three highlights of the season – matches you won, or players who improved, etc.

Three highlights of the season - I would have to say our very first game against Marshall, a home game for us. I was very nervous. I didn’t show it but I was. I remember showing up early, chalking up the field, fixing the lines, making sure we had everything ready, and the next thing I was on the side line watching and coaching the girls as we battled our way to our



Photo courtesy of Jose Alvarez

PLAYOFFS: Poly senior Dianna Barba moves the ball upfield against Eagle Rock in the Parrots’ first round 3-0 loss.

first win 2 to 1. It was a wonderful feeling for me and the team.

Second highlight was half way through our season, I realized how serious we got as a team. Our record was not good - 1-2-2. We faced Arleta High School for the second time.

So in our team huddle, I gave a speech to the girls. I told them “We are the underdogs. It has happened many times in history. Ever since David defeated Goliath, the underdog can win. Si se puede. Yes we can.

Nothing in life is guaranteed. They aren’t guaranteed a win today, ladies. The favorite team doesn’t always win. When they relax, they let their guard down. When they take you for granted, and when you out play them, they will be defeated. Because they can.”

From this point on, if we win every game, we make playoffs.

GIRLS SOCCER SEASON RESULTS

Opponent	Result
Marshall	2-1 (W)
@ Fairfax	2-1 (W)
Arleta	1-1 (T)
@ Verdugo Hills	1-5 (L)
@ Sun Valley	10-0 (W)
North Hollywood	0-0 (T)
Grant	0-2 (L)
@ Monroe	2-0 (W)
@ Arleta	1-0 (W)
Verdugo Hills	0-2 (L)
@ North Hollywood	3-1 (W)
Sun Valley	6-0 (W)
Monroe	0-0 (T)
@ Grant	2-1 (W)
@ Eagle Rock	0-3 (L)

Sure enough, it was a big win over Arleta 1 to 0. It was a really windy game that opened doors. We won that game and every game.

We fought hard to get a playoff spot. In our last game against Grant, we lost 2 to 0, but this time the Poly girls remembered that loss and we showed up to play. We made a statement. We are a better team, faster, stronger and ready for anything and sure enough, we won 2 to 1 to clinch a playoff spot and we were in 2nd place in our league after 1st place Verdugo Hills High with our record 8-3-3. It’s been five years since Poly girls’ soccer were in the playoffs. We made it.

Q. What is the most important trait a coach should have to be successful? And a player?

Having experience working with youth. Start coaching young kids and work your way up. Attending coach clinics, learn new skills and techniques to improve your team.

As a player, it’s always important not to get lazy. Keep conditioning after season. Maybe join a gym or play outside sports, just so when season starts you won’t fall behind.

Q. What did you learn this season, about yourself, about the team, about Poly, about the league?

It was a wonderful year for me as a first-time head coach at Poly. I had so much fun and the league was different from other leagues. It’s a learning experience for me to coach a great team and watch a lot of the players develop their skills and move on. I learned so much from the girls, but I feel they learned a lot from me since I challenged them a lot and made them think a lot and make wise choices off and on the field.

Q. Every team has a personality. Describe the girls’ soccer team’s personality?

Our personality as a team was tough pack with attitude. The girls had a lot to prove to themselves and to everybody they walk around like they have a chip on their shoulders challenging someone to knock it off. I like the fact that they never let anything bring them down. They were always hungry for a challenge.

THE COACH

Q. Where have you coached – what schools, what years? How did your teams do?

I coached in different leagues, recreational parks and at non-profit organizations. I come from Panorama high school I was the JV head coach and assistant coach for varsity for about a year. I have been coaching since 2002 so I have been coaching for about 9 years now in different leagues and recreational parks. Teams I have coached have won league, tournament cups and four championships.

Q. What other jobs have you had?

I was a Program Coordinator, Youth Counselor, and Outreach Coordinator. I work with a non-profit organization in Panorama city for about 12 years

Q. Where were you born and raised?

I was born in East Los Angeles. I’ve spent half of my life in the San Fernando Valley

I attended different schools growing up but for all four years I was at James Monroe High School, I played soccer. I was also part of several club soccer teams outside of school in Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley.

Q. Any special hobbies or preferences?

It’s funny; most coaches have long hours and one job. I have three jobs working with at-risk youth. I also work at a homeless youth shelter in Los Angeles. I love working with kids I never stop working. It’s my passion, working with at-risk youth. I have been working with youth since I was about 16 years old and it helped me change my life and help others change to better themselves and I love helping in my community.

What I do to relax, I draw, I paint, I’m a mural artist. I paint murals for the community to stop vandalism. I host art shows within the community. Painting and drawing help me relax.

SPORTS



Faer: the Exit Interview

Coach’s four-year stay included winning seasons, new records and playoff runs for Parrot varsity.

The OPTIMIST spoke with former Poly football coach Scott Faer about his tenure with the Parrots. These are some comments from that interview.

By Kelsey Cruz
Sports Editor

Q. Each year you’ve coached at Poly, you’ve improved your record. How did you do it? Give us what you think the critical changes or improvements were.

Dedication to the program is how we improved each year. Set high but achievable goals and prepared each day to accomplish them. The critical changes were establishing an attitude (swagger) and made them believe that the sky was the limit. The rest speaks for itself.

Q. What did you want to accomplish while you coached at Poly?

While at Poly, I wanted to accomplish a winning tradition. I wanted my guys to believe that they could compete with anyone. My approach was work hard and believe in each other. Ultimately we wanted a league championship, which we achieved, and a division-2 championship. We got close. Build character and establish confidence in each and every player.

Q. What is left to do?

Keep building. Rome was not built over night and neither is a program that has struggled in years past.

Q. How is the team compared to when you first coached them? How have they changed? What did you teach them?

When I first took over in 2007, the players resisted everything. By the time I finished, we knew if you didn’t bring your top game the score would be lop-sided. The players have changed in that they believe in themselves as athletes and men. I taught them to believe in the guy next to you and prepare yourself year round.

Q. Talk about Kevin Ervin, the records he set and how he was a big part of the team. Was he always this good? Did you see potential in him? How was he the first year you coached him and how has he changed?

The records Kevin Ervin set are remarkable. He is a special talent, one that doesn’t come around every year

He was always good but needed a kick in the butt from time to time. His numbers speak for themselves. No matter what offense you run, it is extremely difficult to rush for over 2,000 yards in back to back seasons.

He was always talented; he just needed to be in the right program. His improvements from year to year were exciting to watch. He had that swagger and belief in his lineman. I knew from day one that we had something special.

He has changed to a player that knew the team was bigger than him. He believed and his achievements speak for themselves. I built a special bond with Kevin that will be never forgotten.

Q. You ran a strong rushing team and not so strong passing team. Talk about your stats compared with other teams and how you’ve improved them over the years: 2200 yards rushing your first season, 3150 rushing your second, 4639 rushing your third and 4865 rushing yards this past season.

I give all the credit to the players. I told them believe in me, the coaching staff and my system and let the rest happen. Gradually, we formed one of the most powerful rushing attacks in the city. As far as passing, I believe we had more success passing then any other run oriented offenses. Let’s face it, we knew each week that we would run the ball. When other teams started to cheat on the run we would throw a bomb on them for an easy touchdown.

Q. We’ve mentioned some stats we think are important. Are there others you believe are important that we haven’t thought of?

Some stats that I feel are important. Anthony Manriquez and Edgar Alejandro both gained over a 1,000 yards and Tony Ephriam averaged 15 yards a carry.

Q. Talk about your legacy overall. You’ve set standards for Poly’s football program that the new coach can benefit from. What challenges have you overcome? How have you shaped your players?

I feel the new coach is walking into a program where the guys believe they can accomplish anything. The program is way better now than when I started four years ago. The challenges I was able to overcome were to bring more spirit to the football program. Also, it is not easy to work with limited resources. I stuck with what I felt was important and tried to perfect things to help us be successful. I helped shape these young men into passionate athletes that will do whatever it takes for the team.

Q. In an earlier story, you told the OPTIMIST “I want to turn Poly into a winning program, no matter how long it takes.” Your thoughts today?

Any coach coming in wants to win. I feel it happened right on track. I knew once they bought in, the rest would happen. I believe in myself as a coach and I feel I have a way of getting my players ready for anything in their way. Although the wins are a lot to be proud of, I am more proud of the positive changes the guys have made. They walk around with way more confidence in themselves and that is priceless. The program is better because they don’t just want to win, they expect it. They know the hard work in the classroom, weight room and on the field will benefit them in the long run.

Q. Why did you resigned?

I resigned for personal reasons.

Q. Where are you now? What job do you have?

I am not coaching anywhere right now. I am just working as a probation officer and being a dad.

Q. Any words of advice for the new coach?

The new coach needs to get to know these guys and understand that they are hungry. Believe in them because there are some very special young men at POLY.

SPORTS



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

LADIES: Varsity tennis girls and coach Evan Rabins with GPA certificates.

Tennis Girls Net League-Best GPA

Time management and extra effort for Coach Evan Rabins’ scholar-athletes.

By Kelsey Cruz
Sports Editor

Balancing sports with academics is a hard enough task, but getting good grades too? Not a problem for Poly’s girls tennis team. The CIF awarded Poly’s girl’s tennis team the Academic Team Excellence Award for maintaining a team 3.6 GPA. The girls are coached by English teacher Evan Rabins. “In between games, or even on the bus, we would bust out our flashcards and study our vocabulary,” said senior Jizel Emralino. “Having an English teacher as a coach makes it very convenient.”

For some, sports with academics isn’t their first rodeo. “Well Wendy and I are used to studying and playing a sport at the same because we figure skated before we started tennis in 11th grade,” said senior Cindy Keo. “I believe that it’s all about time management,” said senior Dianna Barba, “long nights staying up to do homework or study for a crucial exam.”

The girls found strategies to overcome their fatigue. “The best strategy is to organize and prioritize,” said senior Angela Lomboy. “I try to do what has more importance. When procrastination gets the best of me, sacrificing my sleep unfortunately becomes necessary.” “In a way having a sport helps you do your work,” said senior Brenda Gonzalez, “A sport gives you a little pressure telling you ‘okay you have to do this, this, and that when you get home.’” Working also took time away from doing homework, but nothing that these girls weren’t used to. “We would come back at 8pm and work at my mom’s donut shop while doing our homework,” said Keo. “When we get home at 9pm we still stayed up to finish homework, so when we started tennis it was no different from when we were figure skating.” In the end, friends that support and encourage helped boost confidence and increase the willingness to do homework and study for tests. “Having supportive teammates

“Our bus is quiet for a sports team, because most of us would be studying or doing homework.”

who help you with your homework or help you understand something is a plus,” said Barba “Our bus is relatively quiet for a sports team, because most of us would be studying or doing homework,” said Emralino. “Of course, that’s when we weren’t singing songs at the top of our lungs.”

Finding That Silver Lining

Coach see positives in first-round playoff loss to Garfield.

By Kelsey Cruz
Sports Editor

Poly cut a 20-point third-quarter deficit to 3, but it was too little too late and Garfield eliminated the Parrots in the first round of the playoffs with a 74-69 win. “I was proud of our guys for the way that they battled back in the second half,” said head coach Brad Katz. Poly dominated the paint all night, forcing Garfield into outside shots, but Garfield quickly went up 16-10 in the first quarter. Garfield went on a 21-10 run early in the second quarter. After a Bulldog timeout with six minutes left, Poly’s defense picked up. The Parrots turned steals into fast break and foul opportunities, but couldn’t convert. Poly switched to a zone defense, but it was not working on Garfield’s sharp shooting. Even with a hand in their face, Garfield could hit the shot. Not only were their field goals on point, but they were scoring too many points in the paint. Poly went into half time behind 18 points, 38-20. Poly scored 10 points in the first and second quarter. Senior Luis Vargas was the top scorer of the first with five points, and senior Jose Tinajero led the Parrots with eight points in the second quarter. “We watched film on them for two or three days and so we knew what they were going to do,” said Katz at halftime. The Parrots went into the third quarter with a winning

mentality, but Garfield still found ways to dismantle Poly’s good defense. Garfield got nine quick points on transition layups from Poly turnovers to lead 49-23. Katz took a timeout to stop Garfield’s run and the Bulldog crowd. Out of the timeout, Parrot sophomore guard Eric Figueroa drove the lane, was fouled and sank two free throws to get Poly back in the game. Senior Chris Torres scored a critical 3-pointer off a Garfield turnover, the score then 49-28. “At half time we went in and made a couple of adjustments and explained to them a couple of finite things,” Katz said. “They finally understood it and they played with what our slogan was: You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.” Now it was Poly’s turn to get easy layups off Garfield turnovers. Poly dominated the inside, reading the Garfield defense and making passes for open layups. Garfield made a 3-point buzzer beater to end the third with a 54-37 advantage. Poly started the fourth down 20 points, but held the Bulldogs at 69 while narrowing the margin to nine points with 50 seconds left. Junior Kevin Fabian made another critical 3-pointer off a Garfield turnover with 34 seconds left. Figueroa’s penetration and make could have changed the game, but the referee called an offensive foul. Parrot junior Oscar Zelaya’s 3-pointer ended Poly’s scoring. “We were down, we had nothing to lose and we were just going to play,” said Katz. “We came out a little apprehensive, a little slow



Photo by Jennifer Martinez

END RUN: Parrot senior guard Chris Torres avoids Bulldog player.

in the beginning, but we were an inexperienced team, not a lot of playoff experience.” Figueroa led Poly with 12 points. Tinajero and Vargas had 11 each and Torres added two treys. “I was disappointed that we lost, but I was excited by the fact that the underclassmen really got in there and battled back and never gave up,” said Katz. “That’s what I preach and that’s what my players did and I was happy with that. We hope to build on this for next year and use this as a foundation to get to this game again and win it next year.” Third-seed Garfield faces second-seed Grant in a semifinal matchup Thursday following their 75-50 win over fifth-seed Banning Monday.

KELSEY CRUZ - SPORTS EDITOR

Tough Defense Marks Varsity Season

Head Coach Brad Katz builds a foundation, looks to the future.

Q. What were your strengths as a team?

The team’s strength this year was defense. We were the second best defensive team in the league this year. Even though our record wasn’t the best, it showed other teams that we come to play defense. We gave up, on average, 47 points a game, which is second only to Grant in the East Valley League.

The kids really bought in to what we were trying to do, and that was what kept us in a lot of the games. Our defense really kept us close and we used our offense to obviously try to win games. Defense was really our biggest strength. The one thing that you could always play is defense.

Even in you’re having a bad shooting night, if you’re struggling on offense, you could always play defense and that’s how we got the kids to buy into what we want to do. Even if we’re struggling we could always turn it around and play D and that’s what we did.

Q. Best quality you felt this year’s team had? Biggest frustration for you this season?

The desire to want to get better. The last few years have been a struggle here and I think that their commitment to want to get better has been a huge quality in them. Once we got rolling this year, nobody quit and the kids were showing up to

practice on time everyday, worked hard in the weight room and they really want to learn and want to get better.

The biggest frustration was not being able to win so many of the close games that we were involved with. We had many games that we lost by single digits, a lot by five points or less, and we just weren’t able to win those. It was frustrating because we played so hard and we could never just get over the hump. We’re hoping now that in the playoffs we learned enough and we can take care of that.

Q. The worst loss and what made it bad?

The loss that hurt the most was probably the Verdugo Hills game because the first time we played them we lost by quite a bit, and the second time we had an opportunity to win and the kids really believed that they could win, but we ended up losing by five. That one probably stuck with us the longest this year.

Q. What can the team take away from this

season and how does next season look?

That Poly is rebuilding and like I told the kids, I tell them repeatedly that our goal this year was to rebuild a foundation and over the next couple years the goal would be to build the walls to rebuild the program. I think that we’ve done a good job of building the foundation. It doesn’t show in wins and losses, but the foundation has been built and they can take away from that the satisfaction that they’ve been able to gain both on and off the court.

Next season looks good. I think that we’re going to be very young. I’m anticipating having quite a few underclassmen, sophomores and juniors, on varsity. I really like the freshman we have this year on the lower levels, on frosh/soph and JV. I really think that the potential for the next couple of years is very good. I’m very optimistic that we will be able to rebuild very soon.

“Once we got rolling this year, nobody quit and the kids were showing up to practice on time everyday, and they really wanted to learn and get better.”



Photo by Alejandro Cadena