




SINGLES Citlaly Rosillo in the foreground, the #1 girl on the Healdsburg badminton varsity, plays a match against RUP as Diego Rodriguez (#1 boy) and Kathleen Casero (#2 girl) do the same in the background. (Christian Kallen)

Sports

Badminton Sport Gains Ground

By: CHRISTIAN KALLEN  March 16, 2023

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The sport of badminton is not the first thing most people think of when they think of high school sports. But when the atmospheric rivers pour over Northern California and send ballplayers and track athletes running for cover, it's the badminton teams that play on unaffected.

Healdsburg High has had a badminton team for the past five years, said Coach Stan Bischoff, and it's getting close to the point where people are beginning to take notice. "I came up to Healdsburg to try to build a team," said Bischoff, who has introduced the sport at several other schools in the area— at Piner, Elsie Allen, Roseland University Prep and now at Healdsburg.

"What it boils down to is the fourth year players are the ones who are reasonably strong," said Bischoff. "Until you've had four or five, six years in a row uninterrupted by COVID, you don't have those fourth year players." All of the players on the current roster are first and second year players, he said.

Keeping an eye on the competitors, both girls and boys, who were warming up for their March 9 meeting against Roseland College Prep (RCP) at Smith Robinson Gym, Bischoff nodded approvingly at what he was seeing.

"What I like about the team this year is we have four freshman girls who are really good players," he said. "They show some real promise. If they stick with it, they will be very good players in a few years."

It was only the second match of the year. The first was at Analy the previous day, and the more experienced Sebastopol team won handily, 12 to 3. Only Diego Rodriguez and Edsel Valdez won their boys singles matches, and Rodriguez and Kathleen Casero won the mixed doubles.

Badminton is scored similarly to volleyball, with the winning player the first to get to 21 (or a 2-point spread if tied) and best of three to win the match.

The JV players fared a bit better, winning four and losing five.

The March 9 match was more encouraging: The Hounds swept the RCP squad 15–0, and the JV team won three out of its four matches.

Bischoff said a good program needs at least 20 players to draw from, and 25 is preferable, to be competitive at both the varsity and JV levels. There are currently 19 active players in the Healdsburg badminton program.

Matches are held Tuesdays and Thursdays at Smith Robinson Gym for home games, starting at 4:30pm or later. Check for the schedule, roster, scores and other information at worldbadminton.com/healdsburg/2023.