

# JV Highlanders open season with 14-14 tie against Salesian

By Colby Hong

The Piedmont Highlanders JV football team started the 2024 season with a hard fought 14-14 tie against Salesian on Friday, August 30 at Witter Field. This year's JV team is ripe with young talent, including 19 freshman pumped up to get experience on the gridiron. It was a memorable day for many, joining in on their very first High School football game.

Piedmont's returning sophomores Daniel King, Noah Hussain, Colby Hong, and Diego Hurwitz were named team captains by head coach Pouyan Assadi.

PHS won the toss and decided to kick off to open the game. Salesian started on its own 37 yard line and drove all 63 yards for a touchdown in just two plays, including a 58-yard passing touchdown up the sideline. Salesian led 8-0 after a successful two-point conversion.

But the Highlanders were ready to return the favor on Salesian when freshman quarterback Jimmy Lagios stepped to the line on their first play from scrimmage. With just enough blocking, Lagios tossed a perfect throw to Hurwitz, taking it 52 yards to the house for a touchdown. Piedmont trailed 8-6 after coming up short on a two-point conversion.

The rest of the first quarter remained scoreless with both teams were playing good defense. It wasn't until late in the second quarter when Salesian marched



Photo by JC Curran

**Returning sophomores Diego Hurwitz (left), Daniel King, Noah Hussian, and Colby Hong were named captains ahead of JV football's season-opener against Salesian.**

their way to the four-yard line on a multiple-play drive with broken tackles, punching it into the end zone with a little over three minutes left in the half. The Pride went into halftime holding a 14-6 lead.

Salesian's 14-6 lead remained through the third quarter with back-and-forth possessions and fumbles for both sides. In the fourth quarter, inside freshman linebacker George Saunders recovered his third fumble of the game to put Piedmont in a great position in the Pride's red zone.

Piedmont took advantage, scoring their second touchdown on a pass from Lagios to tight end George Saunders. Now trailing 14-12, PHS was forced to go for a two-point conversion. They went

right back to the man, Saunders, converting the two-point conversion and touchdown reception for a rare 'octopus'.

But it wasn't yet over. In the waning minutes, Piedmont's defense came through again when recovering another fumble in Salesian's red zone. Unfortunately, a victory wasn't in the cards for the Highlanders as time expired before PHS could get across the goal line.

**NEXT UP**

Piedmont (0-0-1) hosts Middletown on Friday, September 6 at Witter Field at 4:00 p.m.

*Colby Hong is a sophomore and a member of the Piedmont JV football team.*

# Cross Country team ready for a new season

By Jonathan Comeaux

Piedmont's cross-country team returns this week for the 2024 season with some familiar and new faces. Both the girls' and boys' teams had former captains, Xander Schulte-Sasse and Jamie Schwarz graduate, meaning both teams have a new group of leaders. The Highlanders get their season started this Saturday, September 14 at the Ed Sias Invitational at Hidden Valley Park in Martinez.

For the girls, coach Steve Zirkelbach has an intriguing cast of young runners. He expects the squad to have a solid group of eight runners: Skylar Best, Leighton Mand, Cora Chan, Gladwin Horsley, Amalia Gray, Caroline Taylor, Cora Brozowski-Schrader, and Nasreen Schulze.

"We really only lost one runner in Jamie and we have eight or nine girls who will vie for the top seven spots. In our time trials, they've all been very close, so that bodes really well for the season. All seven runners matter on race day, and we have a good group," Zirkelbach.

Taylor and Best were named captains for the girls' team,



Staff Photos

**Skylar Best, a junior, has been named a captain of the girls' cross country team.**

while Oliver and Henry Horsley are captains for the boys. Best, most notably, reached the 2022 CIF State Championship as a freshman and was our Honorable Mention for 2022 Freshman of the Year. She'll likely lead the girls' team.

"Skylar is a great personality on the team. She brings a lot of positive energy and I'm looking forward to see her use that friendly and positive energy to excite the rest of the team," Zirkelbach said of Best.

Zirkelbach could see Piedmont competing at the NCS Championship meet at Hayward. This year, Division 4 schools receive three entries into the CIF State Championship while the boys event gains four entries to State.

The boys' team will look to replace Schulte-Sasse and Julien Lee, but leading the team will be sophomore Sebastien Swain after his breakout freshman campaign. Noah Sohn, Thomas Ero, Alex Schleuning, Devon Thai, and the Horsley brothers have impressed the coaches thus far.

"The boys' side has Sebastien and some returning runners like Noah Sohn, Oliver and Henry



**Sophomore Sebastien Swain is back after winning the Post's Freshman of the Year award.**

[See Cross Country on page 32](#)

# Volleyball team falls to Deer Valley, St. Joseph

## Drops first two matches of season

By Jonathan Comeaux

Piedmont's girls' volleyball team is back with a new cast of young players. They lost 3-0 to St. Joseph on Tuesday, August 27 in Alameda and returned to Binks Rawlings Gym the following day against Deer Valley, losing 3-1.

Although the squad got its season started with a pair of losses, it is showing signs of promise with a roster of just five upperclassmen. The roster includes six sophomores and two freshmen.

"We have a decent squad," said coach Mariah Cardenas. "We're super young and not as experienced, so we have a lot of room for growth. It's a lot of trial and error, but we're getting there."

The loss to Deer Valley was a close contest, where all three of the Wolverines' winning sets were two-point victories; 25-23,

17-25, 27-25, 25-23.

"We had our first game against St. Joseph and I feel we had a completely different game against Deer Valley. It felt like a different team. We had high energy we're getting into the groove of things after getting some of those first-game jitters out," Cardenas said.

Following the graduation of eight players from the 2023 roster, including leading outside hitter Sadie Town, this year's Highlanders will have some big changes. Making an impact in Wednesday's match with Deer Valley was a group of sophomore outside hitters, Fiona Olson, Hanley Carling, and Charli Panico.

Outside hitter junior Stella Wilk, a new varsity starter, landed some shots, while freshman Julia Stokes will help as a middle blocker. Freshman Allyson Huyhn has already stepped into the role as the setter.

"Allyson is a freshman and



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**Stella Wilks, a junior, led Piedmont with 13 kills against Deer Valley.**

she is stellar,' said Cardenas. "She's disciplined and a teammate you can trust. We also have a middle blocker, Julia Stokes, who is another freshman. Two of the hardest positions are [being played by] freshmen. We'll have growing pains, but it shows we're going to find success/ We're just going to have to take the long route," Cardenas said.

This year's team captains are senior libero Kalindi Kim, senior middle blocker Jules DeYoung, and Annika Hattan-Kutter.

**3-1 loss to Deer Valley**

Piedmont fell 3-1 to Deer Valley by scores of 25-23, 17-25, 27-25, 25-23. In the first set, the Highlanders got out to an early 4-2 lead and the two sides traded points until PHS extended its

[See Volleyball on page 31](#)



**Hanley Carling, a sophomore starter, had 11 kills against Deer Valley.**

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