

Athletes of the Week: Stella Wilk, Mattias Seelenberger

Honorable Mentions:
Kate Jumper, Xavier Henderson

By Jonathan Comeaux

We've named **Stella Wilk** of the girls' volleyball team and football kicker **Mattias Seelenberger** as this week's Athletes of the Week, while honorable mentions go to tennis player **Kate Jumper** and football player **Xavier Henderson**.

Stella Wilk has proven to be a big part of the girls' volleyball team starting off with a 7-3 record now entering the midway mark of its regular season. Wilk logged a team-leading six kills in Piedmont's 3-0 win over Oakland Tech.

Mattias Seelenberger is a sophomore kicker on the football team, converting the longest field goal for Piedmont High since 2015. Against Aragon, Seelen-



Staff Photos

Stella Wilk is a big part of the girls' volleyball team's 7-3 start to the season. She had a team-leading six kills against Oakland Tech.

berger nailed a 41-yard field goal to give his team a 16-14 lead. The Highlanders went on to win 36-16.

Honorable Mentions

Kate Jumper is a senior on the tennis team. She won both of her matches over the past week, including a 6-3, 6-2 over Castro Valley at No. 2 singles. She had Piedmont's only win in a 6-1 team loss to Lick-Wilmerding, winning her match in three closely contested sets, 6-3, 5-7, 11-9.

Xavier Henderson is among the few senior leaders on the football team. He had two rushing touchdowns in Piedmont's 36-16 win over Aragon, and now has scored six TDs over the past two weeks.



Kate Jumper won both of her matches at No. 2 singles over the past week, beating Castro Valley and Lick-Wilmerding.



Mattias Seelenberger connected on a 41-yard field goal in Piedmont's 36-16 win over Aragon.



Xavier Henderson scored two touchdowns in Piedmont's win over Aragon.

Interview with Coach Pouyan Assadi

By Jason Shum

Pouyan "Coach P" Assadi is the Head Coach of both Junior Varsity Football and Varsity Track and Field at Piedmont High School. A modern-day Renaissance man, he plays the violin, speaks fluent Farsi and French, holds a degree in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Minnesota, and is an award-winning product manager at a leading software company.

In high school, Coach P was a recruited track athlete and also played football, experiences that gave him firsthand insight into the discipline, hard work, and sacrifice required of student athletes as they balance academics, athletics, and personal growth. He brings that perspective to every practice and uses it to guide and mentor the athletes he coaches.

Coach P leads with a "players first" philosophy and relentless energy. He inspires athletes to push past their limits and build their conditioning both in-season and out. Under his leadership, the track program has reached unprecedented heights. The boys' team captured the first league titles in school history, and more than twenty athletes have earned spots on college rosters.

Off the field, he is a proud Minnesotan, a lifelong Vikings fan, a husband, and a new parent. Known as one of the best time managers around, Coach P balances his family life, a demanding career, and his coaching responsibilities. He always makes time for his players, whether it is answering a late-night text, checking in, or showing up when it matters most.

Q: What inspired you to start coaching, and how did you get involved with Piedmont High School athletics?

Coach P: Volunteering has always been a part of my life. When I was in junior high and high school, I would volunteer at senior homes, as well as play my violin at different events. Once I graduated from college, I vol-

unteered at Big Brothers Big Sisters in Minneapolis. Then when I moved to San Francisco, I joined BBBS's Bay Area chapter. At the same time, I had friends who coached and really enjoyed it, so in 2019 I signed up to coach at Burlingame High School, which is where my physical work location was. Once COVID happened, the track season ended abruptly in March 2020, and soon after my wife and I moved out of San Francisco and bought a house in Piedmont. One day I was working on a house project and a pack of boys wearing Piedmont gear jogged past me, and it was a reminder to get back into coaching now that I was settled into my new home. From there I reached out to the school, and a few short weeks later I was coaching!

Q: How do you think your coaching helps players prepare for varsity?

Coach P: To properly learn any skill set, you need to build your initial foundational understanding, then add layers over time. For most athletes, starting at the JV level allows them to learn at their own pace, and over time we teach them skills that layer on top of each other. We start with proper form, safety, and basic play calling. Then we see that young athletes become more smooth in their motions, putting together multiple pieces of their learning into one fluid motion, and being able to understand more complex plays across a more comprehensive playbook. Then when they are ready, they go up to the next level where they are well prepared and are able to adjust more easily to the varsity game.

Q: How has your experience as a track coach influenced your approach to coaching football, and vice versa?

Coach P: You quickly learn that most athletic movements and mental preparation are some version of the same, regardless of



Coach Pouyan Assadi

sport, but how you teach each area varies. What is interesting is that through coaching a more diverse set of physical activities, not just football and track and field but also the sub-domains within track and field, you see how athletes learn best. For example, I found that JV football athletes benefit most from film study, so I started videotaping track athletes' critical motions and sharing with them. The results were clear. It expedited their ability to fix their core mechanics, which is part of why we are seeing our JV track and field athletes hitting marks that only top tier PHS varsity athletes used to hit just a few years ago.

Q: Can you share a memorable moment or game from your first JV season?

Coach P: I distinctly remember the St. Patrick-St. Vincent game from the 2022 season, as it was the first game we consolidated our varsity down to JV. I had already gotten to know varsity level guys like Markos [Lagios] and Sam [Shelby], but that week I was able to spend time with them and get to know them more. Beyond that I was concerned about the former JV starters losing significant playing time, but the varsity staff did a good job of rotating everyone in, and it helped that we won by 40. Every athlete had lots of fun, and the coaches did, too.

See Coach Pouyan Assadi on page 29

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TOTC

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- **Make It Interactive:** Ask questions, label objects, and encourage your child to talk about what they see.
- **Model Healthy Use:** Children notice our habits—putting your own phone down during meals shows that conversations come first.
- **Create Screen-Free Zones:** Bedrooms and family meals are great places to prioritize connection over devices.

Finding balance

Screens are here to stay, and they can be a valuable tool when used thoughtfully. The key is balance—ensuring that screen

time doesn’t crowd out the rich, real-life interactions that children need to develop strong communication skills. As a speech-language pathologist, I encourage families to focus less on fear about screens and more on creating meaningful moments of connection when screens are used.

Katie Pengilly is a Speech and Language Pathologist, and the owner of SPEECH Inc., a pediatric private practice specializing in speech, language, reading and writing. She can be reached at kathryn.pengilly@speechinc.com. More information can be found at www.speechinc.com.

Boys’ Water Polo

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quarter and 13-6 in the third. Piedmont scored once in the fourth but allowed four.

Final stats: Patty had four goals, Stein had two, and Kreickhaus had one.

11-9 over Roseville

Piedmont trailed 5-2 through the first quarter, but inched back in the second to trail 6-5 entering halftime. PHS roared back in the third to take an 8-6 lead into the fourth, where both teams netted three goals.

Final stats: Kreickhaus led the

way with four goals, Stein had three goals, while Kappas and Zach Dupree scored twice.

Tuesday vs. Berkeley

Piedmont visited Berkeley on Tuesday, September 23 for their first Western Alameda County Conference match of the season. See next week’s *Post* for match details.

NEXT UP

Piedmont (6-5 overall) visits league foe Castro Valley on Thursday, September 25 at 6:30 p.m.



Photos by Lynne Wright

Elles Kreickhaus scored had four goals against Roseville and three in Piedmont’s close win over Carmel.

Tennis

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11-9. Maahir started slowly but got better as the match progressed. Kate improved along with her and the tiebreak saw some fabulous points and big shots including a winning backhand volley by Kate off of a screaming forehand that Maahir delivered,” Landes said.

6-1 win over Castro Valley

Piedmont first win of the day came at No. 3 doubles with Chiara Silvio and Lila Rosen winning 6-1, 6-1. After that, Castro Valley’s Isabella Huskic won the Trojans’ only match at No. 1 singles against Ella Ruthven, 6-2, 6-1. Huyhn and Chan then won at No. 1 doubles in straight sets, 6-4, 6-1. At No. 3 singles, Faith Chin won her match to give Piedmont it’s third match win, 6-1, 6-1. Clinching the day was Arianna Kortum at No. 4 singles, winning handily 6-2, 6-0. Jumper then won at No. 2 sin-

gles, 6-3, 6-2, while No. 2 doubles team Maddie Tran and Inara Mehta finished the day with a 7-6 (7-3), 6-4 win.

6-1 loss to Lick-Wilmerding

At singles, Jumper won Piedmont’s only match at No. 2 in three sets, 6-3, 5-7, 11-9. Ruthven lost 6-0, 6-2 at the No. 1 spot, Chin lost 6-2, 6-4 at No. 3, and Kortum lost 6-3, 6-0 at No. 4. All three doubles went to the third-set tiebreaker. Chan and Huyhn lost 6-3, 2-6, 10-3 at No. 1, Mehta and Tran lost 1-6, 6-1, 10-4 at No. 2, and Silvio and Ella Thomasson lost 6-0, 5-7, 10-5 at No. 3.

NEXT UP

Piedmont (6-6 overall, 2-0 league) travels to league rival Alameda today, September 24, for a 3:30 p.m. match, then will visit Head-Royce in Oakland tomorrow, Thursday, September 25.

Coach Pouyan Assadi

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Coach Pouyan Assadi with members of the Piedmont track team

Q: How do you balance being a football coach and a track coach?

Coach P: The two seasons as well as offseasons do not overlap, so while it has been a challenge balancing my personal life along with the two sports, the sports themselves have not been too tough to balance. At times there are overlaps in the football spring workout plans and important track meets, but that is really it. The two sports complement each other quite well, and it is no coincidence that we have had a new level of success the last couple of years and buy-in from key athletes in our year-round football-track cycle.

Q: What’s the most unforgettable game or meet you’ve coached so far?

Coach P: The 2024 game against Newark is a game I will remember for a long time. That was the most prep I put into any game thus far, and our athletes came out and had our best week of practice all season. It was our last game of what was a historic season, so we wanted to make sure we came out ready to end the season on a positive note and also set the tone for varsity, who was also looking to secure their back-to-back league title. I remember tons of nuances about the game, but a play that still gives me goosebumps is when we were up 13-7 late in the 4th quarter with Newark driving. They were on our 22-yard line, 2nd and 2, in position to score. But then here comes Max [Fujimoto], jumping an out route, picking it off, and going 80 yards for the pick six go-ahead touchdown. Game, set, match, and we ended the season on a five-game winning streak.

Q: What were some challenges

you faced in your first year, and how did you overcome them?

Coach P: Football is an intense sport where coaches are required to make many tough decisions within a matter of seconds. Play calling, personnel decisions, time management, people management, and much more. It took me a bit to ramp up, but like I mentioned about properly learning any skill set, I built a foundation, understood expectations, practiced by adding layers to build my skill set, and now I feel pretty comfortable with where I am at. I also have not been shy about asking questions to the varsity staff, who have been very helpful in my growth.

Q: How have you built relationships with your players since joining the program?

Coach P: I believe in understanding athletes as individual people first and foremost, and building that relationship is fundamental to creating a successful program. I have done my best to take time to chat with our kids to learn who they are, their hobbies, what gets them excited, and more. As coaches, we are fortunate to meet these boys when they are rambunctious freshmen, and over time your bond strengthens and you chat about more than just football or track. It is always fun when kids, now young adults, come back from college and ask to meet up for lunch and simply talk about life or even ask for advice.

Q: Where do you see the JV football and track programs in the next few years?

Coach P: JV football is still in its “crawl” stage of the crawl-walk-run process, but I feel pretty comfortable saying we are crawling really fast. We are getting

buy-in from families sooner, a larger contingent of freshmen has joined us more consistently for summer workouts, and more families are marking their calendars for the 2026 Tahoe camp than ever. We need to continue moving the process upstream to Piedmont Middle School, where I know [Coaches] Bo (Pou) Tauaho and Isaac (Oskie) Tauaho are working to get younger kids excited about football in general, but also building their foundation sooner, especially for the offensive and defensive lines, so when they enter the JV program we can start polishing their skills instead of building them up from step one. The 1st–8th grade summer camp was another step in the right direction, and hopefully we are in the “walk” stage sooner rather than later.

For track and field, we are in the early stages of “run” (no pun intended). We have sent 20 kids to college for track and field during my time with the team, have won the league title, and attended the CIF State Championship three of the last four years. This last year we even qualified and competed at Nike Nationals. Now we just need to be more consistent and raise the ceiling a little higher to be considered a real premier track and field team.

Q: How do you think you’ve grown or changed as a coach since starting in 2022?

Coach P: I came into coaching almost purely as a people motivator and sports enthusiast, but those two attributes have now fused together and my skill set has grown dramatically. Even when I watch football on Sundays, or professional track during the summer season, I watch it differently. For football I can identify coverages and see patterns, and for track I know what a time or mark is going to be halfway through an event. Beyond that, I have learned how to listen to all the solicited and unsolicited advice and find the best solution to implement in order to create the best experience and the most successful program possible. Add in the relationships and bonds that have formed, and I can say with confidence that I am a better person today than I was before I started coaching.

This interview is part of Jason Shum’s Eagle Scout Project with Troop 15, documenting the history of Piedmont High School football for PiedmontGridiron.club. Featured coaches include Jordan Seiden, Beth Black, Pouyan Assadi, Dick Carter, and Mark Kliszewski.

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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CROSSWORD SOLUTION

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