

# Melting pot heats up at Foothill

## Owls water polo team among best in the state

BY VYTAS MAZEIKA  
Daily News Staff Writer

The goalie played at Los Altos. One co-captain comes from Menlo-Atherton. The other, a freshman, was a four-year varsity member at Mountain View.

### COLLEGE NOTES

At Foothill College, a melting pot of women's water polo players blended together almost from the first day of practice in August. The result is a top-10 ranking in the state with aspirations of an undefeated season in the Coast Conference.

"I wouldn't say it was unexpected because I knew the talent of the girls that I brought in," Foothill coach Jeff Bissell said. "I just didn't realize they would jell and play so well together early."

Last season's top player, Jenna Roe, transferred to Michigan. The offense used to revolve around Roe, who camped in front of the net as the hole set.

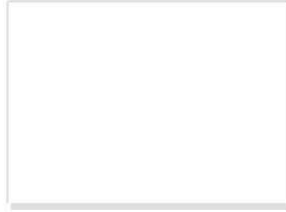
This Foothill team doesn't feature a single star. Seven players have scored double-digit goals already, with four surpassing the 25-goal mark.

"We really try to make plays happen for each other, so we all have the same common goal of trying to be successful as a team," said sophomore Tatiana Sheikhezai, a co-captain out of M-A who has 19 goals and 19 assists.

"It's about sharing the ball," Bissell said. "It's a different system than it has been in years past. We have more options."

The leading scorer is Kendall Preston, with 44 goals and 20 assists. The Mountain View graduate considered attending West Valley, but was swayed by the track record at Foothill. She enjoys the couple of night practices each week, often against seasoned, older players from San Jose State, UC Santa Barbara and Foothill alumni.

So far all the effort has resulted in a No. 9 ranking by [jwaterpolo.com](http://jwaterpolo.com), the highest for Bissell since 2004. The



coach is in his ninth year at Foothill.

"I love the challenge of being thought of as the best," Preston said. "That label is going to do nothing but help us because we're going to work harder and make sure we keep that title."

The Owls (13-2, 3-0 Coast), who are coming off an 18-6 win over Cabrillo on Wednesday, face a unique challenge this weekend when they travel to Rocklin for a tournament at Sierra.

Bissell, who has a 2-year old son, is expecting the birth of a baby brother today. That means he won't make the

trip, leaving the players in the hands of second-year assistant Laura Benton and second-year goalie coach Trisha Quan.

"I tend to echo him from the pool, so it will be different to not have him," said sophomore goalie Lauren Pye, a Los Altos product. "But as a team we hang out together, we go out together, so that communication outside the pool has been important."

The tournament begins today with a doubleheader against Sierra and Santa Rosa, teams Foothill has defeated this season. But to do it on the same day?

"If you want to win a Northern California championship, you're going to have to do something like that in November," Bissell said.

The NorCal Championships are at West Valley in Saratoga on Nov. 13-14.

The current focus is on the Coast Conference Championships at Ohlone in Fremont a week before that. With an undefeated run through the Coast, the Owls will earn an automatic bid into NorCals and from there maybe a bid to state.

Bissell, with a month-old newborn in his life by then, will be barking out orders from the pool.

"We really listen to what he has to say, and we trust him," Sheikhezai said.

This weekend, though, the trust will lay squarely on the melting pot from Foothill.

### Owls soccer on top of league

A 3-0 win over Chabot on Thursday allowed the Foothill women's soccer team to remain unbeaten in the Coast Conference at the midway point of the league season.

Stephanie Bales scored twice and added to her state-leading assists total with her 18th. Samantha Vega also scored, and Shauna Saneinejad and Anna Calderon had assists.

The Owls (9-3-2, 6-0) have outscored league opponents 22-3 while building a two-game lead over Cabrillo and West Valley.

E-mail Vytas Mazeika at [vmazeika@dailynewsgroup.com](mailto:vmazeika@dailynewsgroup.com).