

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

CAL-HI SPORTS STATE RANKINGS

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Senior Editor
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Ramifications of Brea Olinda loss to Canyon Springs dominate new CA top 20

Berkeley gets pushed up to No. 2 while Cougars go up to No. 4 in anticipation of CIF regional finals. Narbonne, Rialto also are major movers.

Contributing: Ronnie Flores, Harold Abend, Paul Muyskens

(After games of March 12)

(Previous ranking in parentheses)

1. (1) Mater Dei (Santa Ana, Calif.) 32-1

This was the week the Monarchs were supposed to prepare for a big rematch with Brea Olinda or Long Beach Poly, but it didn't quite work out that way. Poly didn't make the Div. I regional playoffs and Brea was stunned by Canyon Springs of Moreno Valley in the regional semifinals. That result showed us what we realized in the CIFSS Div. I-AA playoffs -- that Mater Dei had less holes on its roster than Brea or Poly. Even with the starting backcourt of Jordan Adams and Alexas Williamson nursing injuries and likely out against Canyon Springs, it will take a supreme effort to knock off the Monarchs. Mater Dei advanced to the regional final with wins over L.A. Fairfax (79-25), Santa Monica (57-41) and Narbonne of Harbor City (59-38). Alexyz Vaioletama stepped up big with 29 points and 19 rebounds after Narbonne took an early lead and trailed by only four points heading into the final period.

2. (4) Berkeley (Berkeley, Calif.) 28-1*

For several weeks, it's been obvious to us that at some point Berkeley would be placed -- perhaps just temporarily -- ahead of St. Mary's of Stockton in the state top 20. The Yellowjackets own two wins over the only team they lost to -- Carondelet of Concord -- and may get a shot at the D1 state title -- perhaps against Mater Dei -- with a third win over the Cougars in this week's regional finals. This also became a good week to make that move after the No. 2 spot opened up due to Brea Olinda losing to Canyon Springs. Last week, coach Cheryl Draper's team avenged a loss in last year's NorCals to Oak Ridge of El Dorado Hills with a 75-49 victory. Then, it ground out a 52-42 semifinal win over a very stubborn Lincoln of Stockton. Cal-bound Brittany Boyd fouled out with her team leading 46-42 and two minutes remaining, but the Berkeley defense did the job, holding Lincoln scoreless from there. The San Diego State-bound twin towers were the ones that got it done. Power forward Chairese Culberson had 14 points and 24 rebounds, and center Kristina Hunter had 15 points, all in the paint.

3. (3) St. Mary's (Stockton, Calif.) 30-2

For most of the season, the Rams have had games comfortably in control once in the fourth quarter but for the second game in a row the Rams were in a close contest as they picked up a 67-64 win over Archbishop Mitty of San Jose in the second round of the D2 NorCal playoffs. Ali Gibson led the way with a game-high 24 points as the Rams had a first round bye and saw the Monarchs rally late and miss a chance to send the game to overtime. Gibson once again led the Rams' offense with 22 points when they defeated Dougherty Valley, 56-44, to earn a trip to the regional final where they will face Del Oro of Loomis. That was a 70-65 game in the Sac-Joaquin final. St. Mary's stayed in the No. 3 spot in the state this week despite Brea Olinda's loss because one of its losses was to Brea. Also, if Berkeley were to go 30-1 and win the D1 title, which is a longshot because it involves a Mater Dei loss, the Yellowjackets would have the edge in a ranking compared to St. Mary's.

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4. (7) Canyon Springs (Moreno Valley, Calif.) 30-3

While it's true the Cougars have suffered blowout losses to both Brea Olinda and Long Beach Poly, neither of those two teams is still playing. Their 63-53 avenging win over the Ladycats last Saturday in the CIF D1 South semifinals gives them and no one else the chance at beating No. 1 Mater Dei for a berth in the Division I state final. Jasmine Johnson's 20 points and nine rebounds with Tear'a Laudermill scoring 17 points helped turn the tide in the big upset. If Canyon Springs were to lose to Mater Dei, it would have to drop back behind Brea Olinda and Long Beach Poly. The win over the Ladycats, though, is going to be a big feather in the cap of this program for a long time.

5. (2) Brea Olinda (Brea, Calif.) 31-2

It was always known that among the Ladycats, Long Beach Poly or Mater Dei that one of the three was going to see its season end prematurely because all three were in the same section and state playoff division. Two of them actually fell short of expectations, as the Ladycats couldn't stop Canyon Springs of Moreno Valley on defense in the Div. I South regional semifinals. The 63-53 loss comes on the heels of Brea Olinda's 55-36 victory over the same team in the CIFSS Div. I-AA semifinals. The loss must be especially tough to swallow since Brea didn't have major injuries as Mater Dei did and because head coach Jeff Sink considered this his finest starting unit. Gunning for a POWERADE FAB 50 title, the Ladycats now must settle for a final rating that will be higher than Poly because of the two regular season wins over the Jackrabbits.

6. (5) Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, Calif.) 25-3

The Jackrabbits have to drop one spot this week as they must remain behind Brea Olinda with the two head-to-head losses. Poly's final rating will be dependent on Brea's final position, which could rise if Mater Dei ends up as the overall No. 1 team.

7. (6) Carondelet (Concord, Calif.) 28-4

Despite advancing to the Division I NorCal title game, the Cougars unfortunately have to drop a spot in the rankings to make room for Canyon Springs. It won't matter if the girls even the score at 2-2 with Berkeley in the Saturday evening game in Sacramento, because they'll be moving up. The previous three meetings were a two-point win, a three-point loss and a two-point loss. Coach Margaret Gartner's girls prepped last week with a 94-65 win over Armijo of Fairfield, and a 77-66 victory in the semifinals against a solid St. Francis of Sacramento. Hannah Huffman showed why many consider her one of the top junior guards in the state. Against Armijo, she had a game-high 29 points. Then, in the St. Francis win, she made the big plays on both ends of the court in the fourth quarter, including scoring 15 of her career-high 34 points.

8. (8) St. Mary's (Berkeley, Calif.) 29-4

Coach Nate Fripp's girls rolled into their third straight Division IV Northern Regional championship after two impressive victories last week, 71-36, over Branson of Ross, and 60-39 against Notre Dame of Belmont. Now, the Panthers meet Modesto Christian, which beat St. Mary's in the 2009 title game. Freshman Gabby Green led the way with 13 points versus Branson, and April Bernal's 16 points were high against Notre Dame in a game the girls started sluggishly. The senior guard had nine points in a second quarter that saw the Panthers open it up after trailing 7-5 at the end of the first quarter. "The girls are anxious to go and definitely ready to play," Fripp told Cal-Hi Sports.

9. (9) La Jolla Country Day (La Jolla, Calif.) 27-4

The Torreys held up their end of the bargain, and will meet Windward of Los Angeles in what should be a doozy of a D4 South regional final on Saturday at Colony High in Ontario. Coach Terri Bamford's girls hardly broke a sweat in 58-39 and 77-34 victories over JSerra Catholic of San Juan Capistrano and St. Anthony of Long Beach, respectively. Kelsey Plum put on a show against St. Anthony. The sophomore sensation had 34 points, five rebounds, four steals and two assists. Maya Hood had two double-doubles and 40 points and 23 rebounds in the two games combined.

10. (10) Windward (Los Angeles, Calif.) 28-4

Coach Steve Smith didn't have 6-foot-7 Imani Stafford when the teams split two games earlier in the season, a 71-53 defeat at La Jolla Country Day's Sweet 16 event, and a 45-39 victory at the Nike TOC. Country Day didn't have Kelsey Plum in the game the Wildcats won, so it's virtually impossible to predict what will happen now that both teams are at full strength. Smith's girls had just as easy a time last week as LJCD, disposing of Oaks Christian (Westlake Village) and LACES of Los Angeles, 72-37 and 79-40, respectively. Stafford had two double-doubles with 20 points and 25 rebounds (seven blocks) in the two games combined. Sophomore guard Courtney Jaco led the way against LACES with 22 points, four steals and four assists.

11. (11) Cajon (San Bernardino, Calif.) 29-2

Fans of the Cowgirls know how close their team came to beating Canyon Springs in the CIF Southern Section Div. I-AA quarterfinals so they know that it could easily have been their team and not the Cougars that was upsetting Brea Olinda last Saturday. Cajon's only other loss on the season was to Rialto, which was a team that head coach Mark Lehman's girls also defeated. If the right combination of teams wins D1 and D2 state titles, this is a squad that could still move up three or four positions for the final rankings.

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12. (13) Del Oro (Loomis, Calif.) 27-4

After leading St. Mary's of Stockton by as many as nine points in the Sac-Joaquin Section Division II championship game, the Golden Eagles were hoping to get another shot at the Rams and they will get that chance in the D2 Northern California final after two wins last week. As the No. 3 seed, Del Oro had a first round bye before hosting Chico and easily defeating the Panthers, 68-31. Heading on the road for their next game at No. 2 seed Presentation of San Jose, the Golden Eagles rallied from a six-point deficit to force overtime where they ended up a 63-59 winner. Madeline Campbell scored 13 of 18 points in the fourth quarter while Brianna Ruiz scored 19 points and Belle Obert added 16 points.

13. (NR) Narbonne (Harbor City, Calif.) 31-5

Despite having their season come to an end, the Gauchos move back into the top 20 after advancing to the Division I Southern California semifinals where they trailed Mater Dei by four midway through the third quarter before losing 59-38. In their first of two impressive wins last week, they headed to Huntington Beach to take on Edison and the Samuelson sisters and they knocked off the No. 4 seed, 56-50. Atoe Jackson had 21 points and 10 rebounds while Tailer Butler added 20 points in the win over the Chargers. Once again hitting the road, they next headed to Fullerton to take on Troy and earned their final win of the season, 52-47, while avenging an earlier loss this season to the Warriors. Before the season-ending loss to Mater Dei, Narbonne had won 24 of its previous 25 games.

14. (19) Rialto (Rialto, Calif.) 32-3

With usual standout Janae' Sharpe having an off night with just 11 points, junior Mary Williams picked it up with 25 points and 19 rebounds in a 76-60 win against Harvard-Westlake of North Hollywood in the D2 South semifinals. In the previous game, Rialto had to overcome a 24-10 first quarter deficit but came on strong down the stretch to edge Canyon of Canyon Country, 46-44. Sharpe had 26 points in that one. The two wins advanced the No. 1 seeded Knights into this Saturday's regional final against Buena of Ventura, which is a rematch of the CIFSS Div. II-AA final. The winner of the Rialto-Buena game faces either St. Mary's of Stockton or Del Oro of Loomis in the Division II state final.

15. (12) Dougherty Valley (San Ramon, Calif.) 28-3

Since their 56-44 NorCal D2 semifinal loss was to nationally-ranked St. Mary's of Stockton, the Wildcats only suffer a slight drop in this week's rankings. What happens in the next two weeks will decide where they finish in the final rankings and that obviously depends on what St. Mary's does. Dougherty Valley started last week with a 57-47 quarterfinal win over Pleasant Valley of Chico. Rayven Brooks had 23 points against Pleasant Valley, but she could only muster 12 points versus St. Mary's. Still, for head coach Doug Vanderhorst's varsity program, to win an NCS championship and place in the top 20 for the state with the first senior class is a remarkable achievement.

16. (15) Edison (Huntington Beach, Calif.) 28-4

An anticipated second round rematch with Troy of Fullerton in the D1 South playoffs never came to be as the Chargers opened the week with a 56-50 home loss to Narbonne to end their season. After trailing by 10 at halftime, they cut the deficit down to just three points before being unable to get it any closer. Stanford-bound Bonnie Samuelson scored 19 points while Monay Lee scored 11 points in defeat. Dan Wiley's Chargers finished the season a perfect 10-0 in Sunset League play and captured their first CIFSS title since 1987 with a 45-44 win over Troy in the CIFSS Div. I-A championship game.

17. (16) Troy (Fullerton, Calif.) 29-5

After a heartbreaking loss in the final seconds of the CIFSS Div. I-A championship game to Edison, the Warriors rebounded to win a game in last week's regionals before having their season end with a 52-47 loss to Narbonne. Trailing by one with less than two minutes left, they were unable to defeat the Gauchos for a second time after picking up a 55-49 win over them earlier in the season at the Brea Ladycat Classic. In the first round of last week's playoffs, Troy topped San Diego, 52-44. Briana Roberson scored a game-high 16 points in the win over the Cavers while Alecia Dimas scored 10.

18. (17) Santiago (Corona, Calif.) 27-3

The Sharks' season has been over since February 23, but was when they lost to Brea Olinda by just two points. Playing a factor in the Sharks dropping a spot this week is that the Ladycats were upset by Canyon Springs in the D1 South regional semifinals and can no longer possibly end the season as the state's No. 1 team.

19. (18) Etiwanda (Etiwanda, Calif.) 24-4

It's been more than two weeks since the season ended for the Eagles as well, but their loss came in the quarterfinals of the CIFSS Div. I-AA playoffs to Mater Dei. The best win came against La Jolla Country Day and all of the losses except one were to a higher ranked team in the top 20. The only one that wasn't was to Rancho Cucamonga, which was later avenged.

20. (20) Santa Monica (Santa Monica, Calif.) 23-10

The Vikings hang on to the No. 20 slot once again. And why not? They won their Division I Southern

California regional opener, 59-43, over L.A. City champ Carson and then lost for the second time in nine days to Mater Dei, 57-41. In addition to their recent upset win over Long Beach Poly, Santa Monica also was an easy choice to stay in this week's top 20 because of a head-to-head win over D3 South finalist Serra of Gardena.

Dropped Out:

Previous No. 14 Lutheran (Orange).

On the Bubble:

Archbishop Mitty (San Jose) 24-9; Bishop Amat (La Puente) 24-8; Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland) 24-7; Bonita (La Verne) 30-4; Buena (Ventura) 27-7; Campolindo (Moraga) 25-7; Carson 19-11; Hanford 22-8; Junipero Serra (Gardena) 27-5; La Costa Canyon (Carlsbad) 28-4; Lincoln (Stockton) 27-5; Lutheran (Orange) 26-7; Modesto Christian 25-8; Presentation (San Jose) 24-7; Rancho Cucamonga 20-5; Sacramento 28-5; St. Francis (Sacramento) 26-7; St. Joseph (Santa Maria) 27-6; Summit (Fontana) 23-5; Vanden (Travis AFB) 27-5.

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Wednesday at 10:12 AM



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