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ACCAL Girls: Hercules muscles into mix

Berkeley and Pinole Valley need to make room for new threat

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Just when it seemed the elite powers in the Alameda Contra Costa Athletic League had fallen back to earth, the rest of the league looks up only to see the same stars in the sky.

Make no mistake, the gap between the usual top schools has closed a bit, but let's not get carried away.

However, the traditional programs in Berkeley and Pinole Valley now have to make room for Hercules.

"This year, it's kind of up for grabs," Spartans coach Dan O'Shea said. "We're going to do our best to grab it."

The Yellow Jackets remain the slight favorite to win the league title behind Washington State-bound Jazmine Perkins, Gateway-San Francisco transfer Camila Rosen and Airika Warren, who transferred in from Piedmont.

The Spartans are well coached and have perhaps the area's best player in 6-foot-3 junior center DeNesha Stallworth.

Hercules returns a group that reached the North Coast Section Division III championship and added to the mix two talented freshman in Brittany Boyd and Chalese Davis.

There's no waiting to see how the teams stack up.

The schedule makers have Hercules, Pinole Valley and Berkeley all playing each other in the first week and half of league play.

Alameda

COACH: Brad Thomas, second season; Ahshalic Johnson, third season

2006-07 RECORD: 19-9, 9-5

KEY RETURNNEES: G Kiyanna Grimes, Sr.; G Jennifer Sever, Sr.; G T.C. Smith, Sr., G Ananda Gebreyesus, So.; G Allison Dia, Sr.

KEY NEWCOMERS: F/C Chiarra Duncan, So.; F/C Angelica Edwards, Jr.; F/G Avery Glover-Mackey, Jr.

KEY LOSSES: F Bryjette Bonner, G Keely Wong

OUTLOOK: Grimes is the Hornets go-to-scorer with Smith playing point guard. Sever is improving, but the Hornets are young and inexperienced which might explain why they are 0-6 after a 5-1 start. But Alameda always finds a way to contend.

Berkeley

COACH: Cheryl Draper, first season

2006-5 RECORD: 27-7, 13-1

KEY RETURNNEES: F Taylor Wallace, So.; G Tiffany Hamasaki, Sr.; F Jazmine Perkins, Sr.

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KEY NEWCOMERS: G/F Camila Rosen, Jr., F Airika Warren, Jr., F **Chairese Culbertson**, F; **Sharonda Morgan**, So., G Peaches Nipitcisate, Sr.; G Ariel Broshar, Sr.

KEY LOSSES: Alexandria Mitchell, Jennifer Gross, G Dominique Williams-McNac, Jr.,

OUTLOOK: Draper is preaching defense and it has paid off as the Yellow Jackets finished a 9-2 nonleague schedule. Berkeley has size with Rosen, Warren and Culbertson, but Williams-McNac is out for the season with an ACL tear so Perkins will have to provide the leadership.

DeAnza

COACH: Mike Ogbebor, first season

2006-07 RECORD: 0-19, 0-14

KEY RETURNEES: C Wakeelah Shirrell, Jr.; G Priscilla Carioso, Jr.

KEY NEWCOMERS: G/F Ayana Harrell, Jr; C/F Janice McKellher, Jr.;

KEY LOSSES: None

OUTLOOK: The Dons will struggle offensively, but should see improvement on the defensive side of the ball. Ogbebor, a De Anza alum who comes over after a year of assisting on the boys side, expects his team's effort level to be high.

El Cerrito

COACH: Victoria Martin, first season

2006-07 RECORD : 6-16, 3-10

KEY RETURNEES: F Ashley Rollins, Sr.; F Kapriesha

Dearman, Sr.; G Natalia Brewer, Sr.; G **Avauna Walker**, So.;

KEY NEWCOMERS: G Kristian Edwards, Fr.; G Christiana Thomas, Jr.; F Keangela Woods, So.; F Aundrane Fletcher, Jr.; G Kaiya Gatewood, Jr.

KEY LOSSES: G Shameika Davis, F Destinye McGill

OUTLOOK: Rollins and Dearman will carry the Gauchos along with Walker who has shown improvement. El Cerrito is young with many new faces but the talent is there and should be able to compete in the middle of the pack.

Encinal

COACH: Keenan McMiller, second season

2005-06 RECORD : 3-18, 2-12

KEY RETURNEES: G Kennita Bolden, Sr.; F Destinee Martel, Jr.

KEY NEWCOMERS: SG Raeshel Contreras, So.; F/C Janis Peterson, So.; F Kenya Lawson, Fr.; G Janae Monasterial, Fr.; C Katie Robuck, Fr.; F Jacqueline Richard, Fr.; G Saidah Zuberi-Allen, Fr.; G Fatima A , So.

KEY LOSSES: F/C Guilianna Alergrrotti, So.

OUTLOOK: The Jets finished their nonleague schedule with a 7-5 record and are turning some heads with their improvement in the second-year of McMiller's system. With Contreras and Peterson already bursting out for 40-point performances, Encinal has individual talent but is still learning how to play as a team.

Hercules

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<p>COACH: Willie LaNere, sixth season</p> <p>2005-06 RECORD : 22-7, 9-5</p> <p>KEY RETURNNEES: C Mariah Davis, Sr.; G Courtney Oliver, Sr.</p> <p>KEY NEWCOMERS: G Brittany Boyd, Fr.; F Chalese Davis, F; C Rebecca Van Kyrk, Sr; F Darian Sims, So.; G Iris San Juan, So.</p> <p>KEY LOSSES: F Chanelle Antonio</p> <p>OUTLOOK: Expectations are through the roof for the Titans, who believe they can make a run at a championship. Oliver and Mariah Davis are the linchpins holding Hercules together but the question mark is Hercules' bench, which isn't very deep.</p>	<p>adjusting from being role players last season to starters.</p> <p>Richmond</p> <p>COACH: Darryl Robinson, 10th season</p> <p>2006-07 RECORD: 16-9, 6-8</p> <p>KEY RETURNNEES: F Princess Sanders, Sr; F/C Anteneah Wiley, Sr.; G Toccarie Pickett, So.</p> <p>KEY NEWCOMERS: G Rosalieah Buchter, Sr.; F Jasmine Johnson, Jr.; C Shanyla Love, Jr.</p> <p>KEY LOSSES: G Alexis Brown, G Bennika Gipson, G Lakesha Montgomery</p> <p>OUTLOOK: It will be a struggle to replace the loss of Brown, Gipson and Montgomery to graduation, which took away more than half of the Oilers' scoring. Sanders and Wiley have already shown signs of filling those roles, although Robinson hopes someone else steps up to complement the two so a NCS Division II playoff berth isn't out of the question.</p>
<p>Pinole Valley</p> <p>COACH: Dan O'Shea, 22nd season</p> <p>2006-07 RECORD: 25-3, 13-1</p> <p>KEY RETURNNEES: C DeNesha Stallworth, Jr.; G Javier Brantley, Jr.; F Kiarra Rayford, Jr.; G Lauryn Newson, Jr.; Unika Wilson, Jr; G Kimpreet Kaur, Jr.</p> <p>KEY NEWCOMERS: F Andrea Ventura, Fr.; G Tanya Williams, Sr. G Christine Ambegia, Sr.; G Alex Lordee, Sr.</p> <p>KEY LOSSES: G Jaleesa Ross, G/F Marnique Arnold, G Shawntrelle Butler, G Mishan Schexnayder</p> <p>OUTLOOK: The Spartans rely heavily on Stallworth but it's the supporting cast that needs step up for Pinole Valley to be successful. Newson is a defensive gem, but O'Shea says her offensive game needs to improve. Brantley and Rayford are</p>	<p>ACCAL Girls basketball PREVIEW</p> <p>Predicted finish</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Berkeley Hercules Pinole Valley Alameda Encinal Richmond

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