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## Bay Area could dominate NorCals

Mitch Stephens, Special to The Chronicle

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If you're a Bay Area basketball fan, better get directions to Kern County.

It would take one significant upset, but we could see local teams receive all 10 Northern California berths in the CIF State Championships, March 26-27 in Bakersfield.

We still have a week of sectionals to go, but here are my picks to win NorCal titles in each of the 10 divisions:

**Division I boys:** The toughest division to pick - six local teams have legitimate shots - and the division most likely to be represented by a Bay Area team. Newark Memorial has been ranked higher all season, but De La Salle-Concord methodically has improved to a higher level. The Spartans beat Washington-Fremont by 19 on Friday, the same team Newark Memorial edged by four twice. Pick: De La Salle.

**Division I girls:** Berkeley was the overwhelming favorite until highly touted 6-foot junior **Chairese Culberson** sustained a season-ending knee injury last week. With **Brittany Boyd** taking more command - she had 26 points, 13 rebounds and eight steals on Friday - the Yellowjackets have enough to win another section title, but Sac-Joaquin Section power Oak Ridge-El Dorado Hills has a win over national power Brea Olinda-Brea and Stanford-signee **Sara James**. Pick: Oak Ridge.

**Division II boys:** St. Francis is deep, confident and motivated. The Lancers lost in the NorCal final last season but there's no sign - or opponent - that appears in their path to stop them from reaching state this time. Pick: St. Francis.

**Division II girls:** It's a two-horse race between longtime cross-sectional rivals Mitty and Carondelet-Concord. Mitty beat Carondelet 58-52 on Jan. 23 in San Jose. There's no reason to think that score will change much. Pick: Mitty.

**Division III boys:** Bishop O'Dowd-Oakland appears to have a clear path. The Dragons rely on size and strength, led by two of the state's top sophomores, **Brandon Ashley** (6-8) and **Richard Longrus** (6-6). They've won 20 straight and as long as the guard play continues to improve, top contenders Sacramento (22-6), Analy-Sebastopol and El Cerrito are playing for second. Pick: Bishop O'Dowd.

**Division III girls:** Bishop O'Dowd is unquestionably the Bay Area's most talented squad but its stuck in the same division as the nation's top-ranked team, St. Mary's-Stockton (28-1). So is Sacramento (24-5), which beat O'Dowd 63-51. We think the freshman-heavy Dragons will reach the final, but beating St. Mary's-Stockton, which boasts two McDonald's All-Americans, is too much to ask. Pick: St. Mary's-Stockton.

**Division IV boys:** The best team in Northern California - regardless of division - has been Salesian-Richmond and there's no reason to think it won't defend its state title. Scary how good the Pride would be had **Jabari Brown** and **Kendall Andrews** not transferred. Pick: Salesian.

**Division IV girls:** St. Mary's-Berkeley has regrouped since a 52-50 loss to Miramonte-Orinda and won 13 straight behind **Danielle Mauldin**. A steady backcourt should help the Panthers handle chief competitor Modesto Christian. Pick: St. Mary's-Berkeley.

**Division V boys:** Another hands-down pick for a local squad as St. Joseph Notre Dame-Alameda has three standouts from last year's state finalist, including 6-10 **Brendan Keane**. The Pilots also have one of the state's top coaches in **Don Lippi**. Pick: St. Joseph Notre Dame.

**Division V girls:** Clearly a two-horse race between league rivals Pinewood-Los Altos Hills and Eastside Prep-East Palo Alto. Though Eastside has won two of three meetings this year, Pinewood coach **Doc Scheppler** has led the Panthers to three state titles. Pick: Pinewood.

## Chronicle Top 20

### BOYS BASKETBALL

Team	W-L	Last
1. Salesian	29-1	1
2. Bishop O'Dowd	25-3	2
3. Newark Memorial	26-3	3
4. St. Francis	26-2	4
5. De La Salle	25-2	5
6. San Ramon Valley	26-2	6
7. Serra	23-5	7
8. Bellarmine	22-5	8
9. Castro Valley	23-5	9
10. Analy	28-1	10
11. Redwood	27-2	11
12. St. Joseph Notre Dame	24-7	12
13. St. Patrick/St. Vincent	23-5	13
14. Palo Alto	19-6	16
15. Mitty	18-9	18
16. El Cerrito	25-3	19
17. St. Mary's	21-9	20
18. Heritage	22-6	15
19. Oakland	16-11	17
20. Mills	21-7	NR

### GIRLS BASKETBALL

Team	W-L	Last
1. Bishop O'Dowd	24-3	1
2. Berkeley	24-3	2
3. Mitty	22-5	3
4. Carondelet	22-5	4
5. St. Mary's	26-3	5
6. Dougherty Valley	25-2	6
7. Northgate	24-3	7
8. Miramonte	21-6	8
9. Deer Valley	21-6	9
10. Dublin	21-6	10
11. Eastside Prep	23-4	11
12. Pinewood	21-6	12
13. Valley Christian	20-6	13
14. Justin-Siena	27-3	14
15. Piedmont	23-7	15
16. St. Ignatius	18-8	16
17. Presentation	17-10	18
18. Campolindo	20-8	NR
19. Heritage	21-7	NR
20. Montgomery	24-6	NR

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