

Seedings should play out in NCS

THERE WEREN'T MANY surprises when it came to awarding the top seeds in each North Coast Section division, so it's not very bold to say all the No. 1 seeds will win an NCS championship. But that's exactly what should happen.

Here's a look at each division:

Division I

WHO'S HOT: Amador Valley (21-5), Deer Valley (22-4), Monte Vista (25-1), Berkeley (21-6)

WHOM TO WATCH: Deer Valley's Erica Helms and Ashley Ellis, Berkeley's Jennifer Gross and Alexandria Mitchell, Monte Vista's Niveen Rasheed, Amador Valley's Mikayla Lyles, Granada's Kristine Herman and Pittsburg's Easter Faafiti

DREAM DATE: Although Berkeley beat Deer Valley 65-57 at the Acalanes Shootout on Jan. 20, it was Wolverines center Ashley Ellis' first game back from a knee injury, and she played sporadically. The Yellow Jackets' two wins over Pinole Valley may have given them the confidence to go all the way.

BONUS: The Mustangs boast a Division I best 25-1 record and although their 22-game win streak and hopes for an undefeated season were snapped by the Dons, they want to show they're legit.

PREDICTED CHAMPION: Berkeley

Division II

WHO'S HOT: Northgate (23-3), Montgomery-Santa Rosa (26-2) and Petaluma (23-4)

WHOM TO WATCH: Pinole Valley's Jaleesa Ross, Marinique Arnold and DeNesha Stallworth, Northgate's Haley Dahlgard, Montgomery's Christina Barclay and Charise Reece, Richmond's Alexis Brown and Lakesha Montgomery

DREAM DATE: This is the lowest Carondelet (No. 5) has been seeded since the 2001-02 season, when it was unseeded and lost to No. 5 Analy-Sebastapol in the first round. But a matchup with Northgate seems imminent and the

Cougars ousted the Broncos 57-37 in last season's semifinals. This season, the game could go down to the wire. If Carondelet gets by Northgate, it could set up a meeting against the Spartans for the third straight season.

BONUS: Second-seeded Montgomery has reeled off 16 straight wins, but the Vikings and No. 3 Maria Carrillo-Santa Rosa were both beaten soundly by Division IV No. 1 seed St. Patrick-St. Vincent. Pinole Valley beat the Bruins by 10 points at the West Coast Jamboree.

PREDICTED CHAMPION: Pinole Valley

Division III

WHO'S HOT: Miramonte (20-6), Dublin (21-5)

WHOM TO WATCH: Miramonte's Katie Batlin and Ashlee Burns, Alhambra's Sabrina Domingo and Aly Conway, Dublin's Jasmine Smith and Nikki Beckman and Hercules' Courtney Oliver and Mariah



RICARDO SANCHEZ JR.
High school girls basketball

Davis
DREAM DATE: Hercules is hoping for another shot at Miramonte. In last season's NCS first-round game, the Titans battled the Maradors to a 73-69 overtime loss.

BONUS: Despite a 7-17 record, defending Division III champion El Cerrito was able to secure the 12th seed by virtue of a 6-4 record against Division III opponents.

PREDICTED CHAMPION: Miramonte

Division IV

WHO'S HOT: St. Patrick-St. Vincent (24-3), Moreau Catholic (23-3), St. Mary's (21-6)

WHOM TO WATCH: Piedmont's Casey Morris and Airtka Warren, St. Mary's Carmen and Sonia Aguilar and St. Patrick's Alex Cowling, Erika Ruiz and Ashley Moore.

DREAM DATE: St. Patrick is hoping for a rematch with Marin Catholic in the final. The Bruins held a 17-point lead going into the fourth quarter over the Wildcats on Jan. 15 and let it slip away before losing in overtime. St. Patrick hasn't dropped a game since that loss and has beaten its last 12 opponents by an average of 31.3 points.

BONUS: If Marin Catholic wants to see the Bruins, it has to get by No. 3 St. Mary's, which beat the Wildcats 63-58. Marin Catholic's win over St. Patrick dropped Piedmont to the No. 5 seed, despite the Highlanders beating St. Mary's twice this season.

PREDICTED CHAMPION: St. Patrick-St. Vincent

Division V

WHO'S HOT: Branson-Ross (25-3), Head-Royce (18-8), Rincon Valley Christian-Santa Rosa (26-2)

WHOM TO WATCH: Branson's Rachel and Samantha Bilney, Emery's Synchro Bull, Bentley's Julia Vann and Tiffany Chin, Berean Christian's Shada Sadeghi, Rincon Valley Christian's Terrl Higgenbottom and Lisa Muzio and Urban-San Francisco's Jacki Boka-Timmerberg

DREAM DATE: All eyes are on Branson to make it to the state championship. The Bulls' only realistic NCS competition is No. 2 Rincon Valley Christian, but Branson already beat the Eagles 53-34 on Jan. 15. The Bulls have won 23 straight games.

BONUS: Emery travels to Berean Christian for its first-round game Wednesday but it's the third meeting of the season between the two. In the semifinals of the BCL East playoffs, Berean Christian won 38-33. The Eagles also took the first meeting 51-48.

PREDICTED CHAMPION: Branson

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