

FALL PREP PREVIEW: Girls' volleyball

By Jacob H. Pollon, Special to the Daily News
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From left, Dani Salka, Jillian McAndrews, Meg Norton, Kellie Barnum and Christina Higgins lead the Daily News No. 1 team, Harvard-Westlake. (Michael Owen Baker/Staff Photographer)

TOP 10

1. Harvard-Westlake
2. La Canada
3. Flintridge Sacred Heart
4. Royal
5. Thousand Oaks
6. West Ranch
7. Valencia
8. La Reina
9. Oak Park
10. Oaks Christian

Others: Campbell Hall, Saugus, Westlake, Granada Hills, Quartz Hill, Van Nuys, Village Christian, Viewpoint.

10 PLAYERS TO WATCH

Camille Coffey, Flintridge Sacred Heart, Jr., OH

Katie Hank,

Valencia, Sr., OH

Christina Higgins, Harvard-Westlake, Jr., MB

Hanna Levanen,

Granada Hills, Jr., OH

Courtney McCutchan,

La Canada, Sr., OH

Meg Norton, Harvard-Westlake, Sr., OH

Tara Robinson,

Oaks Christian, Jr., OH

Maddie Simpson,

Royal, Sr., S

Allison Summers,

West Ranch, Sr., OH

Katherine Workman,



La Reina, Soph., OH

OTHERS TO KEEP AN EYE ON

Guadalupe Arizon, Sylmar, Jr., OH; Rachel Band, Oak Park, Sr., OPP; Kellie Barnum, Harvard-Westlake, Jr., S; Courtney Cessna, West Ranch, Sr., MB; Casey David, Hart, Sr., S; Katie Deamer, Thousand Oaks, Sr., OH; Rachel Gam, Oak Park, Jr., OH; Rebecca Gieske, Village Christian, Sr., OH; Amber Hawthorne, Granada Hills, Jr., S; Jillian McAndrews, Harvard-Westlake, Sr., LIB; Christina Nelson, Oaks Christian, Jr., OH; Emily Ottinger, Quartz Hill, Jr., OH; Tara Rallis, La Canada, Sr., LIB; Sarah Rumelhoff, Oaks Christian, Sr., OH; Madeline Rumer, La

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Reina, Sr., MB; Dani Salka, Harvard-Westlake, Jr., S; Mary Schroeder, Flintridge Sacred Heart, Sr., OPP; Taylor Schubert, Saugus, Sr., MB; Mary Jo Scott, La Canada, Sr., OH; Marin Seifert, Flintridge Prep. Sr., LIB; Janelle Tucker, Campbell Hall, Sr., OH; Julianna Tucker, Campbell Hall, Soph., S; Alyssa Walton, Flintridge Sacred Heart, Sr., OH; Meredith Ware, Campbell Hall, Sr., OH; Alyssa Woodberry, Van Nuys, Sr., MB; Hayley Woodford, La Canada, Sr., OH; Kathleen Wright, Royal, Sr., OH.

MATCHES TO WATCH

Thursday: Oak Park at Royal

Friday-Sept. 16: Gahr of Cerritos tournament

Sept. 15: Royal at Santa Barbara; Campbell Hall at West Ranch

Sept. 22: Santa Barbara at Harvard-Westlake

Sept. 26: Royal Tournament

Sept. 29: Flintridge Sacred Heart at La Canada

Oct. 8: Royal at Thousand Oaks

Oct. 22: West Ranch at Valencia

Oct. 27: Oak Park at Oaks Christian; Brentwood at Campbell Hall

Oct. 29: Oaks Christian at La Reina

Nov. 5: Harvard-Westlake at Flintridge Sacred Heart

FIVE BURNING QUESTIONS

1. Will Granada Hills finally end its City championship drought?

Yes. Although Palisades has won back-to-back City titles — giving the Dolphins 25 overall — reigning player of the year Laura Goldsmith graduated, giving Granada Hills a legitimate opportunity to follow its boys' volleyball title in May with a girls' volleyball crown in November. The Highlanders' junior trio of Amber Hawthorne, Kate Kaplan and Hanna Levanen might be the most formidable in the City, with senior Amber Streid providing valuable depth in Granada Hills' pursuit of a championship.

2. Will the area produce a Southern Section champion?

Yes. La Canada captured its first championship since 1976 by winning the Div. II-A title last year, but the Spartans might not have to wait that long for another crown. With seniors Courtney McCutchan, Tara Rallis, Mary Jo Scott and Hayley Woodford all returning, La Canada is the favorite to repeat, but will have to get past the Tri-Valley League trio of La Reina of Thousand Oaks, Oaks Christian of Westlake Village and Oak Park. Campbell Hall of North Hollywood, which reached the Div. III-AA final, returns sisters Janelle and Julianna Tucker, along with Meredith Ware, giving the Vikings big championship aspirations.

3. Can Valencia extend its Foothill League title run to eight years?

The Vikings have enough firepower to finish on top again, but don't be surprised if West Ranch gets the best of Valencia once along the way. Valencia returns five players — most notably Delaware-bound Katie Hank — from last year's championship team, which needed five games to get by West Ranch in their first meeting. Led by outside hitter Allison Summers, a Georgia commit, the Wildcats possess the best chance of dethroning the Vikings.

4. What is the most competitive league championship race?

Tri-Valley. Although La Reina won the title last season and reached the Div. II-A final, the road to a repeat won't be easy. The six matches between La Reina, Oak Park and Oaks Christian should all have playoff-level intensity, with any of the three capable of prevailing as champion. The team that is most successful on the road should not only have the inside track to the title, but also a favorable seed for the Div. II-A playoffs.

5. Does Quartz Hill still have the Golden touch?

Replacing 12 players isn't easy on a football team, let alone a volleyball roster, but the Rebels went undefeated in Golden League play last season — losing one game in 14 matches — meaning the rest of the league still has some catching up to do. Littlerock lost only to Quartz Hill last season, but the Lobos lost nine players to graduation. Junior Emily Ottinger will be the focal point of the Rebels' offense this year after being part of a strong supporting cast to Kara Sherrard last season.