

NHSBCA/Baseball America Top 50 Pre-Season Rankings

By Nathan Rode and Baseball America Staff

At Baseball America, we don't pay much attention to whether or not a groundhog sees his shadow. For us, the signs that spring is here include dates like pitchers and catchers reporting for spring training and opening weekend for college baseball. Schedules for high school baseball are far less uniform, but our annual High School Preview provides a little relief.

While schools like St. Rita High in Chicago have a few feet of snow on the diamond, three of our Preseason Top 50 teams were shaking the rust off in preseason scrimmages outside of Miami. The results of the matchups between Archbishop McCarthy High (Southwest Ranches, Fla.), American Heritage High (Plantation, Fla.) and Gulliver Prep (Miami) have no bearing on the rankings since the Maverick Classic consists of exhibition games, but they do remind us that upsets will happen and predicting outcomes for varsity baseball isn't an exact science.

Several long-running spring tournaments continue to bring in great competition and will do more to shape the rankings.

The Hard 9 National Classic in Anaheim, scheduled for April 18-21, will host No. 3 St. Francis High (Mountain View, Calif.), No. 11 Chaminade College Prep (West Hills, Calif.) and No. 21 Bishop Amat High (La Puente, Calif.), as well as several other Arizona and California schools that play at a high level.

The Big League Dugout National Invitational, hosted by Horizon High (Scottsdale, Ariz.), will once again bring in competitive teams. No. 10 Bishop Gorman High (Las Vegas), No. 30 Spanish Fork (Utah) High and No. 47 Forsyth Country Day School (Lewisville, N.C.) are the ranked teams involved, but scouts will certainly show up for a chance to see prospects like 2011 righthander Nick Burdi and 2012 lefthander Lucas Giolito represent their schools.

Rich Hofman has taken over as the head coach at University School (Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.), but will still put on his spring tournaments that featured matchups last year like Farragut High (Knoxville) vs. Flanagan High (Pembroke Pines, Fla.), who finished at No. 1 in 2010.

The staffs of Baseball America and the National High School Baseball Coaches Association compile the Top 50 rankings. In-season polls of the top 25 will be conducted every two weeks and released every other Tuesday throughout the season. The first in-season poll will be released on March 15 and the final poll will be released in June and will expand to 50 teams.

Records below are from 2010 and do not include ties.

1. Carroll High, Corpus Christi, 38-7 (18)

The Tigers won the Texas 5-A state title with six sophomore starters. Repeating in the Lone Star State is a sizeable task, but Carroll has a shot at doing so in 2011 — and 2012.

2. Farragut HS, Knoxville, 42-6 (8)

The Admirals lost 27 home runs and nine wins with C Ethan Bennett and RHP Nick Williams now playing college ball for Tennessee, but preseason All-American Nicky Delmonico (.485-18-75) will move behind the plate to be batterymates with Phillip Pfeifer (16-0, 1.38). RHP Derek Chandler and LHP Xander Taylor bring back eight wins between them.

3. St. Francis HS, Mountain View, Calif., 26-6 (NR)

The Lancers look good on paper with seven players signed to play Division I baseball. The left side of their infield includes all-American Tyler Goeddel (UCLA, .425-1-33) who is a Top 100 prospect at shortstop, but plays third base with the presence of Alex Blandino (Stanford, .417-6-23). Both also pitch, but have support in LHP Colin Reed (UC Santa Barbara, 6-0, 2.04) and RHP Kevin Zhang (UC San Diego, 6-2, 2.29).

4. Jesuit HS, Tampa, 29-4(NR)

Unlike Carroll High, Jesuit didn't win a state title in 2010, but still figures to be very strong this year and next. This squad is led by the top 2012 prospect in RHP/SS Lance McCullers (0-0, 0.39; .457-2-30), who will transition into the rotation after having his innings limited at a young age. His supporting cast includes three underclassmen with D-I verbal commitments, plus two others

garnering offers.

5. Klein-Collins HS, Spring, Texas, 29-15 (NR)

Klein-Collins was one series away from making the Texas 5-A state tournament in 2010, where it could have met with Carroll. The Tigers return all their starters except a first baseman and pitcher. They have a loaded junior class with three already committed to Texas. Junior SS C.J. Hinojosa is one of the top players in his class and OF/LHP Cory Geisler is among the top 100 prospects for 2012 as well.

6. Mountain Pointe HS, Phoenix, 22-12 (NR)

A postseason All-American in 2010, C Kevin Cron (TCU, .491-22-52) will lead a Pride squad that finished second in Arizona's 5-A-I class last season. The Phoenix and Tempe area schools tend to bludgeon each other, but the Pride is strong up the middle with twin junior middle infielders in Sam and Scott Kinergy, as well as junior 1B Joey Curletta (.396-4-15), who is receiving interest from a few western D-I programs.

7. Archbishop McCarthy HS, Southwest Ranches, Fla., 27-5 (10)

The Mavericks will certainly miss 3B Nick Castellanos' bat, but they return three seniors with D-I commitments as well as two juniors verbally committed to Miami. RHP Nick Travieso transferred from neighboring powerhouse American Heritage High (Plantation, Fla.) and is a top prospect for 2012. 3B Joze Brizuela (Florida State, .500-3-34) will also close and Nick Basto comes in from Hialeah's American High to man shortstop.

8. Mission Viejo (Calif.) HS, 18-10 (NR)

Strength on the mound is key to a prep team's success and the Diablos have two D-I righthanders in senior Willie Kuhl (Cal State Fullerton, 6-5, 3.62) and junior Kieran Lovegrove (Arizona State) who will get his first taste of varsity ball, but impressed scouts on the summer circuit in 2010. Mission Viejo will also lean on OF Austin Saenz (CSF, .341-2-15) and SS Ryan Raslowsky (Cal State Northridge, .382-3-30).

9. Owasso (Okla.) HS, 32-7 (31)

History itself makes the Rams a favorite to win the Oklahoma 6-A title, but RHP Dylan Bundy (Texas, 11-1, 1.58) is one of the top five arms in the country and will have a D-I batterymate in Drew Stiner (Oklahoma State), who comes in from Sand Springs High, as well as RHP Phillip Wilson (Oral Roberts, 7-1, 3.42).

10. Bishop Gorman HS, Las Vegas, 36-4 (2)

The Gaels have a choke hold on the Nevada 4-A state title, winning every season since 2006, but are under new leadership as Nick Day takes over as head coach. They will have plenty of experienced offense with SS T.J. White (UNLV, .438-7-54) and C Erik VanMeeten (UNLV, .356-8-33). OF Johnny Sewald (.396-2-19) is verbally committed to Arizona State and 2012 3B Joey Gallo (.465-15-61) figures to see some time on the mound as well with his low-90s fastball.

11. Chaminade College Prep, West Hills, Calif., 25-7 (NR)

The Eagles reached the quarterfinals of the Division II Southern Section tournament in 2010, but expect to advance further with a senior class that has seven D-I signees. RHP Mathew Troupe (Arizona, 5-1, 1.65) has reached 95 mph with his fastball and figures to get a strong look for the draft. Chaminade has a second righthander that can reach the low 90s in Dalton Brown (Duke, 3-1, 1.56).

12. Hamilton HS, Chandler, Ariz., 28-5 (NR)

The Huskies have won three state titles since 2003 and seek a fourth after returning 10 lettermen and six starters from a team that reached the state tournament in 2010. They'll be strong on the mound with RHPs Zak Johnson (8-1, 2.73) and Jake Andrews (10-3, 3.24) anchoring the staff. OF Parker Osbourne (.432-3-24) will lead the offense.

13. Parkview HS, Lilburn, Ga., 25-5 (NR)

The Panthers were bounced in the second round round of the 2010 Georgia 5-A state tournament by eventual runner-up Lassiter High. They return nine starters including junior RHP Matt Olson

(7-2, 3.71), who is a top prospect for the 2012 draft. RHPs Jesse Foster (7-2, 2.23) and Zac Reinstein (4-0, 3.78) will provide depth on the mound, a key to surviving in Georgia.

14. Don Bosco Prep, Ramsey, N.J., 18-3 (NR)

The Ironmen should have their best team since a Top 10 finish in 2008. Former big league pitcher Mike Stanton took over the head coaching position for a year in 2010, but Mark DeMenna is the man in charge now. He has two senior D-I signees and a strong junior class that has one early commit in IF George Iskenderian (Maryland, .356-2-16) plus five others that figure to sign with a D-I program.

15. Gulliver Prep, Miami, 26-6 (NR)

The Raiders are no stranger to national rankings and are back in the mix. They may change their name to the Hurricanes for 2011-12 because one senior and five juniors are committed to Miami. LHP Chris Diaz (6-2, 1.96) will lead the pitching staff while 3B Eric Neitzel (.519-9-27) and C Chris China (.595-6-39) will provide some thump at the plate.

16. Archbishop Mitty HS, San Jose, Calif., 31-3 (5)

The Monarchs won the Div. I Central Coast Section title in 2010, but are in the same conference as No. 3 St. Francis. They'll look to their two D-I pitchers to lead a bid for a repeat. RHP Tyler Davis (Washington, 11-0, 2.87) is the ace and RHP Brett Fuller (San Jose State, 1-1, 4.20) will step into the No. 2 slot.

17. Broken Arrow (Okla.) HS, 32-8 (NR)

No. 9 Owasso and Broken Arrow are in the same conference, will play in the same spring break tournament and are the top favorites to win the Oklahoma 6-A title. Like the Rams, the Tigers have one of the top arms in the country in RHP Archie Bradley (Oklahoma, 7-5, 1.46), a second D-I RHP in Mason Hope (Oklahoma, 9-2, 1.31) and a D-I C in Dylan Delso (Arizona State, .259-3-26), who will need to step it up at the plate.

18. Rockwall-Heath HS, Rockwall, Texas, 39-3 (NR)

The Hawks were well on their way to finishing at No. 1 in 2010, but were upset in the region finals of the Texas 4-A tournament. Two juniors return with an early commitment to D-I programs—3B Jovan Hernandez (Texas Tech, .514-11-64) and RHP/1B Jake Thompson (Nebraska, .444-7-54; 9-2, 1.52). SS Brett Boswell hit .338 with two home runs as a freshman.

19. Bishop Amat HS, La Puente, Calif., 27-4 (44)

The Lancers were victims of arguably the biggest upset in 2010. While ranked No. 3 in the country they lost in the Div. 4 Southern Section quarterfinals. They have three senior D-I signees in C Bernado Zavala (San Diego State, .317-4-30), OF Jordan McCraney (.333-3-21) and RHP Adrian Franco, who did not pitch in 2010. However, the Lancers' best player is SS Rio Ruiz (USC, .528-4-34), who may see some time on the mound after an impressive showing on the showcase circuit.

20. West Boca HS, Boca Raton, Fla., 26-6 (NR)

The Bulls have two preseason all-Americans and top draft prospects in RHP Michael Kelly (Florida, 9-4, 1.73) and SS Tyler Greene (Georgia). Greene moved from Georgia where he hit .477-8-28 for Roswell High. Junior LHP Parker Danciu (6-1, 1.50) is verbally committed to Florida and will be the team's No. 2 starter.

21. Columbus (Ga.) HS, 32-5 (9)

The Blue Devils are a perennial power in Georgia and return nine starters from a team that won the 3-A title in 2010. RHP Kyle Carter (10-2, 2.14) and Will Solomon (9-1, 3.03) provide a one-two punch. Carter also hit .402-11-42 in 2010 while playing the outfield and will lead the offense against a very difficult 2011 schedule.

22. Catholic HS, Baton Rouge, 33-7 (NR)

The Louisiana 5-A champions in 2010, Catholic High is the favorite to repeat with four D-I seniors. RHP Aaron Nola (LSU, 7-0, 1.50) has one of the best changeups in the country and will have RHP Alex Massey (Tulane, 7-0, 3.22) as a rotation partner. OF Chris Sciambra (LSU, .374-

9-33) will lead the offense and LHP Jacob Knox (6-2, 1.22) will provide depth on the mound.

23. Edison HS, Huntington Beach, Calif., 18-9 (NR)

The Chargers had a promising outlook on 2010 when SS Christian Lopes (USC, .275-2-21) and his brother, 2B Timmy, transferred to Edison. The older Lopes struggled at the plate last year but gives Edison a trio of Top 100 prep prospects that also includes LHP Henry Owens (Miami, 10-2, 1.35) and OF Eric Snyder (.395-7-17).

24. Sumrall (Miss.) HS, 36-1 (4)

The Bobcats looked like they were going to break the record for longest winning streak, but faltered going for victory No. 68. They bounced back to win the 3-A title in Mississippi and carry an 11-game winning streak into 2011. They'll be led by SS Connor Barron (Southern Miss, .514-6-60) and LHP Luke Lowery (Southern Miss, 11-1, 1.13) as they seek a fourth-straight state title. They'll be tested early on Feb. 26 against No. 25 Petal High.

25. Petal (Miss.) HS, 30-4 (13)

The Panthers upset Madison's Central High in the 6-A championship in 2010 and have the best shot at taking down No. 24 Sumrall. RHPs Brandon Smith (11-1, 4.15) and Cody Conkle (8-0, 3.52) return to lead the rotation while junior OF Anthony Alford (.390-7-35) will lead the offense and try to confirm the belief that he is the best athlete in the state.

26. St. Rita HS, Chicago 32-10 (NR)

27. La Cueva HS, Albuquerque 28-2 (16)

28. Rancho HS, Las Vegas 33-5 (NR)

29. Free State HS, Lawrence, Kan. 19-7 (NR)

30. Spanish Fork (Utah) HS 23-1 (25)

31. Western Branch HS, Chesapeake, Va. 18-6 (NR)

32. Harrison HS, Kennesaw, Ga. 29-9 (21)

33. Maize (Kan.) HS 20-2 (NR)

34. St. John's College Prep, Washington, D.C. 12-6 (NR)

35. Kell HS, Charlotte 19-9 (NR)

36. Brenham (Texas) HS 35-7 (11)

37. St. Edward HS, Lakewood, Ohio 28-3 (17)

38. Tottenville HS, New York 25-1 (42)

39. Archbishop Moeller HS, Cincinnati 29-2 (NR)

40. Pace (Fla.) HS 29-2 (7)

41. Redmond (Wash.) HS 20-6 (NR)

42. Creighton Prep HS, Omaha 24-8 (NR)

43. The Bolles School, Jacksonville 29-3 (3)

44. Elk Grove (Calif.) HS 26-6 (50)

45. Oxford (Ala.) HS 26-18 (NR)

46. Marist School, Atlanta 30-8 (28)

47. Forsyth Country Day School, Lewisville, N.C. 19-8 (NR)

48. Byrnes HS, Duncan, S.C. 24-14 (NR)

49. American Heritage HS, Plantation, Fla. 24-6 (NR)

50. Westview HS, Portland 39-1 (NR)