

2012 Preseason High School Top 25 Capsules

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February 22, 2012

For those of us that cover the amateur ranks at Baseball America, we're especially excited about the 2012 season.

For starters, the draft class is exceptionally deep and we know the next few months won't be short of surprises, big performances and excitement. The level of talent directly affects the Preseason Top 50 as we see several teams that are clear contenders to finish at the top, starting with defending national champion Archbishop McCarthy High out of Southwest Ranches, Fla.

Stacking high school teams against each other is a difficult task since few of the top teams square off on a regular basis. While a few of those in the Top 50 will have to face a ranked foe to get through the playoffs, national tournaments are good indicators when judging competition faced.

Making its debut in 2012 will be the USA Baseball National High School Invitational. The event will be held at Team USA's National Training Complex in Cary, N.C., from March 28-31. Competition will be fierce with 10 teams from the Top 25 and 11 in the Top 50 participating. Schools making the trek include: No. 2 Bishop Gorman High (Las Vegas), No. 3 Carroll High (Corpus Christi), No. 4 Harvard-Westlake High (Studio City, Calif.), No. 5 Parkview High (Lilburn, Ga.), No. 6 Mater Dei High (Santa Ana, Calif.), No. 8 Oxford (Ala.) High, No. 11 Orange (Calif.) Lutheran High, No. 18 Gulliver Prep (Pinecrest, Fla.), No. 21 Washington High (New York), No. 22 Highlands Ranch (Colo.) High and No. 47 Russell County High (Seale, Ala.).

The National Classic in Southern California will put on its 23rd installment April 9-12. Among the field are No. 7 Spanish Fork (Utah) High and No. 23 James River High (Midlothian, Va.) as well as perennial power Bishop Amat High of La Puente, Calif.

Rich Hofman is continuing to run tournaments in Florida and will host a couple of ranked teams. No. 32 Jenks (Okla.) High will play in the Baseball Fever Classic, March 20-23, and No. 30 Madison High (Vienna, Va.) is slated to play in the Spring Classic, April 2-5.

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 13 and the final poll will be released in June and will expand to 50 teams. Records below are from 2011 and do not include ties.

1. Archbishop McCarthy HS, Southwest Ranches, Fla., 29-3 (1)

The defending national champion, Archbishop McCarthy is no exception to the rule that perennial powers reload rather than rebuild. Nine players with starting experience return from the 2011 team and five have committed to Division I schools.

2. Bishop Gorman HS, Las Vegas, 35-4 (6)

With six straight state 4-A titles in Nevada, the Gaels are clear favorites in the state and seek their second No. 1 finish with eight seniors committed to D-I programs. Head coach Nick Day feels pitching depth will be a key strength, but the offense returns 61 home runs and 96 stolen bases from 2011, giving Bishop Gorman a blend of power and speed. Their

top player is 3B/RHP Joey Gallo (.471-25-78). He is committed to Louisiana State, could be an early pick in June and will likely see some more time on the mound with his power arm.

3. Carroll HS, Corpus Christi, 36-7 (31)

The preseason No. 1 a year ago, Carroll High is all in for 2012. The Tigers' seniors won a 5-A state title as sophomores in 2010 and returned to the final four in 2011. Eight starters return from last season and they're led by OF/RHP Courtney Hawkins (.410-15-42; 10-2, 2.10), a Texas signee who has shown vast improvements as a hitter in the last year. RHP Oshea Dumes (9-2, 2.05) was a big part of the Tigers' success in 2010 and logged 79 innings last season.

4. Harvard-Westlake HS, Studio City, Calif., 23-8 (NR)

The Wolverines' league title in 2011 was their first ever. They figured to compete in the Southern Section and garner national attention with a potential top-five draft in RHP Lucas Giolito (9-1, 1.00; UCLA), but quickly found themselves with the best rotation in the country when LHP Max Fried transferred to Harvard-Westlake. Also a UCLA signee and first-round prospect, Fried went 7-3, 1.31 as a junior at Van Nuys' Montclair Prep, which shut down the entire athletic program to save money.

5. Parkview HS, Lilburn, Ga., 29-10 (18)

Early losses hurt Parkview's chances at finishing atop the poll in 2011, but the Panthers finished strong with a 5-A state title in Georgia and return eight starters for this season. Two seniors, 1B/RHP Matt Olson (.426-17-53; 8-3, 3.65; Vanderbilt) and RHP/OF Jack Esmonde (4-1, 2.76; .409-0-20; Georgia) are committed to D-I programs while two juniors and a sophomore have made verbal commitments to Georgia and Georgia Tech. OF Josh Hart (.449-4-22) is one of those juniors and should get plenty of attention from scouts in 2013 with his speed.

6. Mater Dei HS, Santa Ana, Calif., 24-6 (26)

With seven starters coming back, the Monarchs look to improve upon their quarterfinal finish in the Southern Section playoffs. Their strength should be at the plate with OF Ty Moore (.510-3-37; UCLA) and C Jeremy Martinez (.388-4-32) anchoring the middle of the order. Martinez is verbally committed to Southern California and a top prospect for the 2013 draft class. Moore also serves as the team's ace and went 10-3, 3.11 in 2011. The Trinity League may be one of the toughest in the country and Mater Dei will have to keep an eye on No. 11 Orange (Calif.) Lutheran in the rearview mirror.

7. Spanish Fork (Utah) HS, 29-3 (2)

The Dons finished 2011 ranked No. 2 in the country and may have captured the top spot if they didn't have to go through the losers' bracket to claim the state title. Nevertheless, Spanish Fork has a history of strong pitching and return 25 out of 29 wins. RHP Hayden Nielsen (11-1, 2.11; BYU) sits in the mid-80s but has only one career loss and pounds the strike zone. RHP/1B Kayden Porter (North Carolina) went 9-1, 2.14 last season, but has a habit of being erratic and may shift to the closer's role. He also has huge raw power and hit .570 with 14 home runs in 2011.

8. Oxford (Ala.) HS, 31-7 (NR)

The Yellow Jackets are led by what they call "The Core Four", a group of seniors committed to D-I schools. OF Matthew Goodson (.480-22-62, 25 SB) is signed with Alabama and brings an interesting power-speed combination to the table. RHP/1B Tucker Simpson (.407-5-38; Florida) will likely see a lot more time on the mound in 2012 after logging just 13 innings last season. RHP/3B Jackson Stephens (7-1, 1.04; Alabama) is the team's ace, but also provided some thump with 13 home runs in 2011. Simpson's younger brother, RHP Trent, should be a prized recruit in the 2013 class and could see a spike in innings as well.

9. Jesuit HS, Tampa, 26-6 (22)

For the past two seasons, Archbishop McCarthy has beaten Jesuit in the 4-A state championship game, but new classifications will prevent a rematch with the Tigers now being 5-A and Mavericks moving up to 6-A. Jesuit is loaded with talent as four seniors and three juniors are committed to play for a D-I program. At the forefront is RHP Lance McCullers Jr. (5-3, 2.02), a Florida signee with a mid-90s fastball, nasty slider and aspirations of being a first-round draft pick. He also provides some offense, hitting .422 with seven home runs last year.

10. Klein-Collins HS, Spring, Texas, 22-10 (NR)

Klein-Collins was going to be good no matter what this season, but retaining SS C.J. Hinojosa (.405-16-61) was a huge boost. Hinojosa had plans to enter Texas early, but couldn't quite squeeze in the necessary credits. 3B Austin Dean (.436-11-28) is also committed to Texas and provides a potent bat. RHP Jake Jarvis is just a sophomore, but starred for Team USA's 16U team in 2011 and has reached the low 90s with his fastball.

11. Orange (Calif.) Lutheran HS, 15-14 (NR)

Double digit losses aren't often seen in a high school ranking, much less a near-.500 record, but the Lancers are in one of the country's toughest leagues and made it to the second round of the Southern Section playoffs in 2011. SS Cody Nulph (.284-1-8) had a down year at the plate, but the Pepperdine signee is a career .333 hitter and will provide good defense. The Lancers' strength will be pitching with RHP Brent Wheatley (7-2, 1.87; USC) and LHP Art Vidrio (4-0, 0.58) leading the staff. Vidrio is uncommitted but is 12-1 with a sub-1.00 ERA in three seasons.

12. Mountain Pointe HS, Phoenix, 28-5 (10)

The Pride lost 47 home runs to graduation, but 27 of those came from Kevin Cron, now at Arizona State, and OF Joey Curletta (.445-21-52) returns with four other starters that helped capture a 5-A-I state title in 2011. Mountain Pointe also boasts a strong group of underclassmen that should keep the team in the national picture for the next couple of seasons.

13. Memorial HS, Houston, 32-10 (NR)

With six seniors signed to play D-I baseball, the Mustangs expect to get to the Texas state tournament in 2012. C Boomer White (.500-9-49; Texas Christian) will lead the offense, but have support from Baylor signees SS/RHP Drew Tolson (.432-2-26; 7-2, 1.95) and 3B Ben Carl (.379-1-25). OF Beau Rathjen (.390-13-45) could roam the same outfield as his brother Jeremy at Rice after graduating. The Mustangs also have junior UT/RHP Kacy Clemens (.364-4-38; 8-1, 5.28), son of Roger Clemens.

14. Gloucester Catholic HS, Gloucester City, N.J., 31-2 (23)

National prowess is a difficult achievement for northern schools with shorter seasons and lesser competition, but Gloucester Catholic has laid claim to finishing on top and might be in that discussion again with five seniors committed to D-I schools and one of the state's top juniors. IF/C Joe Brooks (East Carolina) hit .444 with four home runs and eight triples in 2011. He'll get some support from the likes of 1B/OF John Brue (.551-9-56; St. Joseph's) and IF Brent Tenuto (.472-3-29; Stony Brook). Junior RHP Michael Shawaryn went 7-0, 1.70 with 44 strikeouts in 40 last season and will be the team's ace.

15. Luella HS, Locust Grove, Ga., 23-8 (NR)

No. 5 Parkview had to go through Luella to win a state championship in 2011, beating the Lions in the quarterfinals. A repeat showdown might be in the works as Luella brings seven starters back from last season. OF/LHP Vincent Jackson (.424-3-25; 7-3, 2.98) is committed

to Tennessee and has good raw power in a frame that oozes projection. His supporting cast will consist of 3B Chase Scott (.385-8-26; Tulane) and LHP Matt Kelley (8-2, 2.89), who will attend Southern Union (Ala.) CC.

16. Don Bosco Prep, Ramsey, N.J., 24-1 (47)

The Ironmen were primed for a state title run last season but shockingly lost in the first round of the tournament. They're on their fourth coach in four years so it's anybody's guess how things will shake out, but they have the talent to go deep into the postseason. They currently have seven seniors signed to continue their careers with a D-I program, but could have an eighth if RHP Tommy Burns (9-0, 1.53) lands somewhere with his solid arm strength. Don Bosco has SS George Iskendarian (.421-3-28; South Carolina), 1B Matt Dacey (.461-8-33; Michigan) and 3B Grant Van Orden (.375-2-18; Army) to lead the offense.

17. Clovis West HS, Fresno, Calif., 19-11 (NR)

The Golden Eagles had a national title in their sights in 2010 before losing a game late in season and eventually falling in the Central Section championship. After a down year in the 2011, 13 players—seven starters—return to try revive Clovis West's power in Northern California. RHP/OF Tyler Ferguson (8-2, 2.13; .350-2-17; Vanderbilt) provides a two-way threat while SS Ryan Clark (.313-0-7; UC Santa Barbara), who made just two errors last season, will anchor the defense.

18. Gulliver Prep, Pinecrest, Fla., 25-6 (NR)

In 2011, the Raiders started at No. 15 and got as high as No. 6 after beating ranked teams like Parkview and Jesuit (Tampa), but tumbled out of the rankings when they fell a win shy of the Florida state tournament. Only one starting pitcher was lost from that team while one LSU and four Miami signees return. SS Adrian Marin (.469-2-17) will lead the offense with 3B Eric Neitzel (.368-5-22) and C Chris Chinaea (.500-7-34)—the lone non-Hurricane commitment. LHP Ivan Pelaez (5-0, 1.95) will serve as the staff ace.

19. Santa Fe HS, Edmond, Okla., 32-7 (NR)

Oklahoma had a banner year in 2011 with five pitchers getting selected in the first five rounds while Broken Arrow finished at No. 3 after beating Owasso, which finished at No. 11, in the 6-A championship. Owasso's dominant reign may be over as Santa Fe seems to be the team to beat in 2012. The Wolves have spent every week in the top five of the state polls over the last eight seasons and have two D-I arms to lead the way. RHP Ty Hensley (8-2, 3.48; Mississippi) figures to be an early-round pick in June and is complemented by LHP Jordan Watson (7-1, 0.18; Oklahoma State). Hensley will also provide some pop after hitting .344 with five home runs and 24 RBIs in 2011.

20. St. Rita HS, Chicago, 30-7 (NR)

A perennial power in Illinois, St. Rita returns six starters from last year's team that lost in the sectional semi-finals. Of the returning players, four have D-I commitments including C Zach Soria (.476-4-40; Louisville) and 3B Stephen Belmonte (.390-6-44; Purdue). The pitching staff will be led by RHP Eddie DeLaRiva (12-1, 2.78; Purdue) and LHP Scott Thomas (10-3, 3.64).

21. George Washington HS, New York, 22-0 (34)

After having their streak of league titles interrupted in 2010, the Trojans returned to the top, going undefeated in the Public School Athletic League and winning another city title. Six starters are back from last year's squad, two of which are getting some attention from the pro community. OF Fernelys Sanchez (.423-5-22, 38 SBs) has blazing speed and C Nelson Rodriguez (.452-10-51) has big raw power. Head coach Steven Mandl is also back at the helm after serving a year-long suspension for alleged recruiting violations.

22. Highlands Ranch (Colo.) HS, 18-7 (NR)

The Falcons are poised for a strong run in Colorado with eight starters coming back from a team that lost in the state semifinals in 2011. It was the program's fifth straight appearance in the state playoffs. Leading the way for Highlands Ranch will be ace RHP Ryan Burr (9-1, 1.99; Arizona State), who is a Top 100 High School Prospect for the 2012 draft. His batterymate, C Adam Gauthier (.435-5-25; Dartmouth) will lead the offense.

23. James River HS, Midlothian, Va., 19-5 (NR)

James River has been a strong program for a number of years and churns out its share of D-I players, but five signees is a new high for the Rapids. Their season will hinge upon the pitching staff with three arms committed to Virginia and Virginia Tech. The ace of the staff will be LHP Nathan Kirby (4-1, 2.79; UVa), who is one of the top southpaws in the country. Behind him will be LHP Kit Scheetz (8-1, 1.67; VT) and RHP Tyler Carrico (1-0, 1.97; UVa).

24. Columbus HS, Miami, 16-9 (NR)

In 2010, the Explorers began the season at No. 2, took over the top spot a month into the season, held on for two weeks and then started tumbling down the poll only to drop out for good. Columbus once again has high expectations and hopes to live up to them this time around. Six players are committed to D-I schools with RHP Mike Vinson (4-1, 1.86; Florida) leading the staff. RHP Yency Almonte miss the 2011 season, but will also be a go-to arm after pitching in the Under Armour All-America Game in August.

25. Loganville (Ga.) HS, 29-5 (NR)

The Red Devils fell in the Georgia 4-A state semifinals in 2011 and return just three starters from that team, but they look ready to compete on a national level for the next two seasons. They have a good group of underclassmen with OF Clint Frazier (.371-17-44), a Georgia signee and top prospect for 2013, leading the offense. RHP Garrett Ford (8-0), 4.10; Georgia State returns to lead the pitching staff.