

# High School Teams To Watch

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If you follow our high school coverage closely, you may have noticed that our rankings stopped at 25 this year. Rather than simply presenting teams next to a number in the 26-50 range, we will make note of teams outside the rankings that are worth keeping an eye on. To kick off the season, we have eight teams to highlight—one from each district the ranking committee represents.

The Baseball America/National High School Baseball Coaches Association Top 25 is voted on by a ranking committee that is made up of eight district representatives, two at-large members and two committee co-chairs. The eight districts are New England, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Upper Midwest, Midwest, Southern, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast.

These eight teams aren't necessarily the next eight in order. They are simply an unranked team from their region worth watching.

## **New England: Grand Street Campus HS, New York**

The Wolves won New York City's Public School Athletic League Division A championship in 2012, beating Washington High, and have six key players back for this season. Ralphy McDonald is a plus runner that has stolen 93 bases over the last two seasons. He plays center field and is committed to Louisiana State-Eunice JC. Middle infielder Elijah Rodriguez's father, Frank, was a second-round pick of the Red Sox in 1990 and spent seven seasons in the big leagues. The younger Rodriguez is committed to Howard (Texas) JC. Junior righthander Alex Cuas will be the staff ace and throws in the upper 80s. Grand Street Campus has produced a few prospects recently. Righthander Dellin Betances signed with the Yankees in the eighth round in 2006 for \$1 million and outfielder Williams Jerez was Boston's second-round pick in 2011 and he signed for six figures. Shortstop Jose Cuas, Alex's older brother, was a 40th-round pick of the Blue Jays last year, but he didn't sign and now plays for Maryland.

## **Mid-Atlantic: Lake Braddock HS, Burke, Va.**

The defending 3-A state champion, Lake Braddock has six Division I recruits back, but have been hit hard by offseason injuries. The Bruins still expect to compete for a state title, but health will be a major factor. The offense is led by catcher Garrett Driscoll (.274-0-14; George Mason), center fielder Alex Gransback (.453-4-31; Virginia Commonwealth), third baseman Alex Lewis (.302-1-20) and shortstop Jack Owens (.369-1-15; East Carolina). Mitch Spille (.357-4-31; Radford) is the Bruins' utility man. Lefthander Thomas

Rogers (11-1, 1.15; North Carolina) is out for the season after Tommy John surgery so the Bruins will have to look to their depth for pitching.

### **Southeast: Roberson HS, Asheville, N.C.**

Roberson boasts a solid list of alumni that includes big leaguers Darren Holmes, Chris Narveson and Cameron Maybin. Without a state championship since 2002, the Rams are looking to get back on top in North Carolina. This season and next is their best chance. Five players are committed to D-I schools and three of them are juniors. Braxton Davidson (.316-8-32; North Carolina) can play the outfield and first base while getting on the mound on occasion. He and catcher Dominick Cammarata (.294-3-21; Georgia) have gotten the most attention from evaluators. The No. 1 starter this year will be righthander Parker Johnson (7-1, 1.33; Wake Forest) with junior righthander Katon Harwood (Clemson) being another potential starter.

### **Upper Midwest: St. Laurence HS, Burbank, Ill.**

The Vikings went 30-7 and lost in the Illinois 4-A sectional finals. They have three of their top four pitchers back and five from the everyday lineup. Righthander/third baseman Zach Lewis went 6-2, 2.18 with two saves in 52 innings last season while also hitting .286 with 22 RBIs. Utility player Brad Wood (.426-0-30) and infielder Mike Kornacker (.306-1-24; Purdue) are the top hitters returning and will be expected to contribute more on the mound after pitching 16 and 19 innings respectively. Two juniors, catcher T.J. Marik (.269-0-9) and righthander Alex Hitney are committed to Austin Peay.

### **Midwest: Rockwood Summit HS, Fenton, Mo.**

Last year's Class 4 state champion, Rockwood Summit has six starters back and moves up to Class 5 this season as Missouri expands its classifications. Rudy May, who was a second team all-state pitcher in 2012, is back to lead the Falcons on the mound. He went 6-2, 0.76 last season with 42 strikeouts and 17 walks in 46 innings. Outfielders Nick Banvakais (.438-1-15) and Eric Beisel (.322-4-20) and DH Matt Kaysinger (.414-1-14) return to lead the offense. Beisel is committed to Missouri for football. They will get support from shortstop Ryan Fritz (.264-0-9), second baseman Jared Corbett (.300-1-7) and catcher Chad Jones, all juniors.

### **Southern: Coppell (Texas) HS**

The Cowboys had six D-I players and ranked as the preseason No. 5 team in 2009, but couldn't live up to expectations and were ousted from the playoffs after their district championship. They'll look to compete in the state again with eight starters back from last season and six committed to D-I schools again. Three are committed to Air Force—shortstop Tyler Zabochnik (.382-0-18), righthander Matt Delaney (4-2, 1.95) and infielder Tyler Jones (.367-0-8). Righthander Jake Elliott (6-4, 1.38) is committed to Oklahoma,

righthander Austin Gardner (4-1, 2.27) is committed to Wichita State and first baseman Jackson Cramer (.370-6-21) is committed to West Virginia.

### **Rocky Mountain: Bishop Gorman HS, Las Vegas**

It feels weird putting the Gaels in this space and not the top 10, but the reality is they lost a lot of experience to graduation so a younger group will have to step up quickly. Just two players are committed to D-I schools right now—outfielder Kenny Meimerstorf (.417-9-47; Arizona) and outfielder/lefthander Jerell Latham (.478-3-41; Brigham Young). Latham made just four appearances last season and the Gaels only return 51 of their 248 innings pitched. Righthander Neiko Martinez (6-0, 2.80) has the most experience on the mound. Don't count Bishop Gorman out. Seven straight titles still means something, but it won't be a walk in the park either.

### **Pacific Coast: El Toro HS, Lake Forest, Calif.**

The Chargers return nine starters from a team that lost in the second round of the Southern Section tournament to eventual champion Newbury Park (Thousand Oaks, Calif.). The rotation will be fronted by righthanders Chasen Ford (11-0, 1.06; Yale), Stephen Villines (6-2, 1.42) and Ryan Kayoda (Cal State Fullerton), who made just five appearances last year. Catcher Gavin Collins (.337-1-10) will lead the offense with support coming from outfielder Logan Tomlinson (.291-0-12; Indiana Wesleyan) and infielders Dan James (.364-4-25), Jonah Arenado (.333-0-7), Sam Clark (Bucknell) and Nick Paglialonga (Navy).