

Top 25 Pre-Season Ranking Capsules

By Baseball America Staff

In 2007, it looked as if New Jersey's Seton Hall Prep would hold the No. 1 spot for the entire season. But the Pirates stumbled in mid-May, as one loss allowed Long Beach's Wilson High to finish the season as the nation's No. 1 team. Wilson returns to the top spot for the 2008 Baseball America/National High School Baseball Coaches Association Preseason High School Top 50.

Changes are inevitable, as several of these teams will face each other in regular season games or tournaments like the National Classic and Anaheim Lions Tournament. Seton Hall Prep did not make the 2008 preseason rankings after losing several key players, including righthanders Rick Porcello (10-0, 0.18), who was taken 27th overall by the Tigers in the 2007 draft, and Evan Danieli (11-0, 0.45) who is currently attending Notre Dame.

American Heritage HS, Plantation, Fla. made the biggest jump, going from unranked in the final poll of 2007 to No. 4. The staffs of Baseball America and the National High School Baseball Coaches Association compile the Top 50 rankings. In-season polls will be conducted every two weeks and released every other Monday throughout the season. The final poll will be released June 22. Records indicated do not include ties.

1. Wilson HS, Long Beach 32-3 (1)

Despite the loss of righthander Elliot Glynn (CIF Southern Section Player of the Year, now at Connecticut) and shortstop Ryan Dent (Red Sox, first round supplemental) the Bruins are set to defend their national title with help from All-American Aaron Hicks, who stars on the mound and at the plate, and third baseman Zach Wilson, an Arizona State signee. Six Bruins have signed Division I scholarship offers.

2. Calvert Hall HS, Towson, Md. 33-0 (32)

In 2007, the entire Cardinals program went undefeated. The freshman, junior varsity and varsity teams combined to go 75-0, and it looks as if Calvert Hall will sit atop the national rankings for a number of years. The varsity team has won three straight state titles and 37 games in a row, led by senior righthander/third baseman Kevin Lingeran (.390-3-47; 7-0, 1.49), one of 15 seniors on the roster.

3. Sarasota (Fla.) HS 28-3 (19)

The 6-A state champions in 2007, Sarasota returns second-team All-American shortstop Casey Kelly (.344-4-20) and lefthander Josh Renfro

(4-0, 1.20) to defend their title in Florida's largest classification, which was the program's eighth state championship.

4. American Heritage HS, Plantation, Fla. 23-6 (NR)

With five players in the top 350 prospects, seven seniors with D-I scholarship commitments and two All-Americans, the Patriots are loaded and primed for a run at the national title. First baseman Eric Hosmer (.380-9-20) will lead the way with his raw power while catcher Adrian Nieto (.376-5-18) will also trouble opposing pitchers.

5. Catalina Foothills HS, Tucson 25-5 (NR)

Three Falcons D-I recruits lead the way for a team that returns nine starters. Infielder Ashton Kent (.425-1-13, 11 SB), a Southern California signee, led Foothills to a state soccer title in February. Kansas State recruit Kayvon Bahramzadeh, a member of the rotation since his freshman year, provides power to the lineup as a first baseman, though his future lies on the mound thanks to a strong breaking ball.

6. Barbe HS, Lake Charles, La. 35-5 (18)

The Bucs fell short in the 2007 state quarterfinals after an impressive run, finishing 35-5. They won't have shortstop Carmen Angelini (Yankees, 10th round) or catcher Thad Griffen (Louisiana-Lafayette), but Angelini's replacement, talented sophomore SS Garin Cecchini, should lead a potent offense. Righthander Trey Brown (8-0, 2.22), one of two McNeese State signees on the roster, looks to lead this year's staff.

7. Walton HS, Marietta, Ga. 32-7 (NR)

The Raiders won the Georgia 6-A championship in 2007 but have a chance to be even better this year. They return eight starters, which includes the whole pitching staff. Georgia Tech signee Mark Pope (11-3, 1.76) and North Carolina recruit Kyle Putkonen (13-1, 2.31) will look to lead the charge and at least duplicate their impressive junior seasons.

8. James River HS, Midlothian, VA. 25-2 (9)

The Rapids lost 10 seniors off last year's Virginia 3-A championship squad, but they return their top two starters, both of whom are Wake Forest recruits. Righthander Daniel Marrs (5-1, 2.03), whose fastball reaches the low 90s, and two-way star Austin Stadler (12-0, 1.29; .464-7-30) should help James River deal with challengers such as No. 36 Cosby (Va.) High.

9. Vista Murrieta HS, Murrieta, Calif. 28-4 (NR)

Last year's CIF Division II champions, Vista Murrieta returns six starters, including the three pitchers—Taylor Garrison (4-1, 1.44), Brian Valenzuela (10-1, 1.23) and Josh Weise—who combined for an 11-inning

shutout at Dodger Stadium in last year's title game. Senior shortstop Derek Legg (.326-2-20), a Long Beach State signee and son of coach Dave Legg, paces the lineup.

10 St. John's College HS, Washington, D.C. 23-6 (NR)

Nine Cadets signed letters to play for Division I programs starting the fall, but they have a national title on their mind right now. Lefthander Scott Silverstein and outfielder/righthander L.J. Hoes will lead a solid team that will participate in the Anderson Bat National Classic, which has seven teams in the top 50 competing.

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

In 2007, the Gaels dog piled for their state title, twice. After a heads up play by Reno's Galena High, the game went into extra innings where Bishop Gorman eventually prevailed. Not only is there a chance to repeat with junior first baseman Jeff Malm (8-2, 1.91; .453-4-57) pitching and hitting, but this team has also won two American Legion state titles.

12. Cypress-Fairbanks HS, Cypress, Texas 32-7 (13)

First-team All-American outfielder Robbie Grossman (.420-4-19), a Texas signee, will be the spark for the Bobcats in the defense of a 2007 5-A title. With Grossman setting the table, righthander Tommy Collier (11-1, 0.45) will be the ace of a solid pitching staff.

13. Tupelo (Miss.) HS 34-5 (NR)

The Golden Wave hasn't won a state title since Kirk Presley led the team back in 1993, but lefthander/first baseman Kyle Thornton (12-2, 1.41; .344-6-34), an Ole Miss recruit, has the team poised to build off last season's success. Senior outfielder Gardner Richey (.357-7-45) and senior infielder/righthander Joseph Koon (.345-3-30; 6-1, 3.35) provide a strong supporting cast.

14 Bartlett (Tenn.) HS 40-5 (NR)

Another participant in the National Classic, the Panthers need a little more depth in their pitching to face the tough competition. However, head coach Phil Clark can build around his senior all-state duo of righthander/first baseman Heith Hatfield (10-1, 2.84; .367-14-59) and shortstop Jacob Wilson (.437-13-71), both Memphis signees

15. Texarkana (Ark.) HS 22-6 (NR)

The Razorbacks have a solid group of returners led by senior shortstop Bo Bigham (.500-6-34), who is signed with Arkansas, and righthander/third baseman Garrett Underwood (5-2, 2.89; .419, 36 R). With a 6-A title in 2007, a solid team for 2008 and 11 juniors returning in 2009, Texarkana can't be considered a one-hit wonder.

16. Sandra Day O'Connor HS, Phoenix 29-6 (NR)

The Eagles return 11 lettermen, eight of which were regular starters, for the 2008 season under a new classification, 4-A. Arizona State signee Zach MacPhee (.455-3-29) will lead them along with San Diego State signee Maverick Lasker (8-3, 2.64; .410-8-35), a righthander/first baseman with a three-pitch mix and low-90s fastball on the mound.

17. Moody HS, Corpus Christi, Texas 39-3 (11)

The Trojans got national attention last year after beating local rival Calallen in front of an 18,000 (over the three-game series) to advance past the second round. They eventually prevailed as state champs, their second state title in four years, and could repeat with a formidable group of seniors led by Marc Gomez (13-1, 0.68), a Texas-San Antonio recruit, and junior first baseman Rudy Flores (.380-10-44).

18. Kokomo (Ind.) HS 28-4 (NR)

Kokomo lost six all-conference seniors from a team that lost in the state finals, but will look to lefthander Bryce Robinson (7-0, 0.96, 12.76 K/7 IP) to lead the team before heading off to Georgia Tech.

19. Holt HS, Wentzville, Mo. 21-11 (NR)

Righthander Tim Melville (10-1, 0.89), the nation's top prep pitching prospect and North Carolina signee, gets most of the attention, but lefthander Jimmy Foster (6-4, 2.64), a Saint Louis recruit, complements him in a strong rotation.

20. Chatsworth (Calif.) HS 30-4 (8)

Having Mike Moustakas and Matt Dominguez drafted in the first round of the draft was exciting for Chatsworth, but it also is an obvious big blow to the offense. However, senior righthander James Wharton (10-1, 1.61) returns to lead the pitching staff, and 5-foot-7, 135-pound junior shortstop Kasey Toven (.313-0-20) provides stability.

21. Flanagan HS, Pembroke Pines, Fla. 23-8 (NR)

Miami signee Rolando Gomez (.435-9-29) is an All-American second baseman but will hold down the shortstop position in Flanagan's quest for a title after being ousted in the 2007 semifinals. Florida International recruit R.J. Fondon (11-1, 1.17) reprises his role as the staff ace.

22. Cypress (Calif.) HS 23-6 (NR)

The Centurions are minus No. 3 overall pick Josh Vitters (drafted by the Cubs) but have four Division I signees, including shortstop Danny Pulfer (Oregon), who transferred in this season, and Hawaii signee Matt Sisto (10-2, 1.39), a 6-foot-5 righthander.

23. Owasso (Okla.) HS 35-3 (22)

In his 26th season, coach Larry Turner just reloads these days at Owasso. In 2008, the Rams will have 10 players back from 2007, led by lefthander Brian Flynn (10-1, 1.53) who has signed with Wichita State. Senior outfielder Ben Kozma (.423, 48 R), younger brother of Cardinals' 2007 first-round pick Peter, keys the offense from the leadoff spot.

24. Washington HS, New York 39-4 (NR)

Catcher Jean Carlos Rodriguez, who ranks among the best defensive catchers in the country, is expected to lead his team to another New York City championship with outfielder Fernando Frias, a strong, physical presence at 6-foot, 220 pounds. Coach Steve Mandl compares Frias to the school's most famous alumnus, Manny Ramirez.

25. Lutheran HS, Orange, Calif. 19-8 (NR)

The Lancers should make a lot of noise in the CIF Southern Section with their pitching staff. Three arms are signed with Division I programs, including righthander Gerrit Cole (3-0, 1.20), a UCLA signee with an upper-90s fastball.