

Inland Sports Baseball & Softball semifinal previews:

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Five softball & six baseball teams have reached their divisional semifinals on Tuesday afternoon. One more baseball team (Canyon Springs) can punch their ticket to a final four on Monday afternoon. Softball finals will be Friday & Saturday at Deanna Manning Stadium in Irvine while all baseball finals will be played on Saturday split between Dodger Stadium & UC Riverside. Congratulations to Great Oak & Norco who are the only schools in our area to have baseball and softball teams playing on Tuesday. Let's take a look at the matchups.

Softball:

Division 1>>

#1 Norco @ Huntington Beach Tuesday 315pm:

CIF-SS Division 1 is regarded by many experts as one of the toughest playoff brackets to win nationwide. Last year the Huntington Beach softball team was given very little chance to compete with Norco in their quarterfinal matchup. They not only did that but pushed the Cougars to extra innings before falling on a Kinzie Hansen walk off double 6-5. Flash forward one year & it's the Cougars and Oilers matched up again, this time one round later and in Orange County.

Huntington Beach coach Jeff Forsberg had to mix and match lineups as his team was hit by injuries throughout the year but still managed to fight their way to this point. Jadelyn Allchin leads their offense with a .453 average and 11 extra base hits. Grace Uribe sports an impressive 2.16 ERA and opponents batting average of .214 in 97 innings of work. They've recorded wins against King (3/16 Best of the West) & Grand Terrace (5/2 Rd 1 of playoffs) from our area and lost to CBL runner up Yucaipa (8-4 in Michelle Carew Tournament).

Norco in two games has a cumulative scoring margin of 14-0 during postseason play thus far. In 14 innings of postseason work Sarah Willis has allowed 4 hits while striking out 16. Five of the nine Cougars with 27 games played average .350 or higher led by Kinzie Hansen's .467 average and 14 extra base hits.

Division 1>>

Gahr @ #2 Great Oak Tuesday 315pm

We were oh so tantalizing close to an all Inland Sports area semifinal but the Gladiators scored two runs in their half of the seventh and won 4-3 against Santiago/Corona. Meanwhile the Wolfpack have two playoff one run victories against Orange County teams (3-2 v San Clemente in Rd 2 & 8-7 v Santa Margarita in the quarterfinals). After falling in this round on the road at Los

Altos a year ago Great Oak seeks redemption and a shot at Saturday night's final. With the short fence and a prevailing wind blowing out to center field look for home runs to be plentiful in this one.

A note if you are planning on attending this one: Both Wolfpack baseball and softball are home in Tuesday's semifinals. School lets out at 230pm and according to baseball coach/assistant AD Eric Morton most of the after school traffic clears out by 250pm. Give yourselves plenty of time finding parking and getting to the field.

Two out of these next three matchups pit Garden Grove and Ambassador League teams against each other. After three fall championships (Linfield Christian football & volleyball; Ontario Christian volleyball) and two winter championships (Linfield Christian girls basketball & Western Christian boys basketball) the small school league is looking for its sixth and seventh championship appearances of this school year. These are the league's eighth and ninth semifinal berths this year with Linfield Christian boys soccer and Western Christian girls basketball failing to reach championship games.

Division 2>>

#6 Roosevelt @ #9 South Torrance Tuesday 315pm

Just like Division 2 in baseball one could call D2 softball the Division of Doom. Two teams not in the top five seed lines reached semi final Tuesday in this matchup and its overall #1 Marina lost in round one to Temecula Valley. As a result of having three consecutive home games the Mustangs will travel to South Torrance for this matchup. First year head coach Mike Smith has done quite the job in his inaugural campaign leading Roosevelt softball. Their first round win over Redlands (CBL Champion) was the program's first postseason win since 2013 and this run is the deepest in school history.

Division 6>>

#5 Woodcrest Christian @ #1 Santiago/Garden Grove Tuesday 315pm

Royals softball is back to a semi-final for the first time since 2008 when Calvary Murrieta bested Woodcrest Christian 12-1. In 2019 the Royals have a cumulative postseason scoring margin of 32-9 and have only trailed for 2.5 out of 19 innings. Their offense is led by the dynamic duo of Angelina Allen (.753 average & 27 extra base hits) and Ryleigh Carricaburu (.645 average & 18 extra base hits). Six Royals who have appeared in all 22 games have .300 or above batting averages. In the circle Paige Markley has recorded 13 K's while allowing 9 runs (6 earned) and 4 walks in 19 innings of postseason work. After allowing two runs to San Marino on Thursday in the Titans first inning she threw six innings of shutout softball allowing five hits and four strikeouts to get the win. This will be the Royals first seeded opponent according to the division's coaches poll with #2 Notre Dame/Riverside, #4 Sierra Vista, and #7 Bloomington Christian all defeated in round 2.

Garden Grove/Santiago has a cumulative postseason scoring margin of 19-9. On Thursday in the quarterfinals they fell behind 6-3 against Garey (#8) before scoring 8 unanswered runs to prevail 11-6.

Division 7>>

#4 La Quinta/Westminster @ #1 Western Christian Tuesday 315pm

Note: Greenbelt Park in Upland is the off campus venue for Lancers softball

Western Christian has been the overwhelming #1 seed in this division that has pretty much held to form with only #2 Whitney falling before the semifinals among its four seeded teams. The Lancers have a cumulative scoring margin of 49-1 in three games thus far. Eight players on coach Edward Wood's roster have batting averages of .300 or above led by Kepa Vinyard's .550 average and 19 extra base hits. The Aztecs cumulative scoring margin thru three games is 38-6.

Baseball:

Division 2>>

Crescenta Valley @ #10 Norco Tuesday 315pm

I don't think one would be too far out of line to call this the Division of Doom. Two seeded teams made the semifinals, including #10 Norco who gets to host unseeded Crescenta Valley. The other seed to make it was #9 Santa Margarita who defeated Mountain Pass League champion Tahquitz 7-1 in their opening round matchup. Seeds 1-8 were all eliminated by Friday. Each team took a one run loss to Etiwanda (CV 2-1 & Norco 8-7).

The Cougars earned a semifinal berth by defeating Villa Park 4-1 in Orange County on Friday. Stewart Slessor's three run home run in the sixth was a difference maker for the Cougars who sport a postseason scoring margin of 12-2 in three games. With 13 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings of playoff work under his belt Michael Forbes has a 1.05 ERA while allowing nine hits and striking out thirteen. In 29 games this year Slessor has a .397 average with eleven extra base hits while Christopher Coniff is hitting .391 with twelve extra base hits. Norco's semifinal road includes wins over Don Lugo (Mt. Baldy champ), St. Bonaventure (Tri Valley champ) , and Villa Park (North Hills champ).

Crescenta Valley has an 11-4 postseason scoring margin after wins against Rio Mesa (Pacific League champ), Thousand Oaks (Marmonte League champ) and Quartz Hill (Golden League champ) in the playoffs.

Division 3>>

#9 Yorba Linda @ #4 Great Oak Tuesday 315pm

After two years away from the postseason dance Wolfpack baseball has returned and in a big way. Great Oak was 3-5 at one point in Southwestern League play before rallying to finish 9-6 which got them the league's #2 seed. In their three playoff games they have a cumulative postseason scoring margin of 21-4. Thru twelve innings of postseason work starting pitcher Cameron Mabee has allowed 5 hits and 3 runs (1 earned) while recording 16 strikeouts along with 3 walks. Zach Arnold has a .433 average with 16 extra base hits to lead the offense while Isaiah Lopez has a .365 average with 5 extra base hits. To get here they've defeated Apple Valley (Mojave River 2nd place), Long Beach Poly (Moore League Champion), and Northview (Valle Vista 2nd place).

Meanwhile #9 Yorba Linda has a postseason scoring margin of 28-11 in three wins over Capistrano Valley Christian (San Joaquin champion), Paloma Valley (Ivy League 2nd place) and Gardena Serra (Del Rey 3rd place). Blake Wink's .381 average with 12 extra base hits leads the offense while Matt Williams 2.43 ERA in 57 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings of work lead Mustang pitchers thru April 23 and his opponent batting average is .270.

Division 4 Quarterfinal>>

Alhambra @ #4 Canyon Springs Monday 315pm

Winner to play @ #1 Sonora Tuesday 315pm

Friday's rain pushed this game back to Monday afternoon with the winner turning right around and playing tomorrow afternoon against #1 Sonora, a 9-0 winner over Irvine. It forces Canyon Springs coach Darious Carter & his counterpart Steve Gewecke from Alhambra to make a decision. Do I start my ace and keep him to a short outing (enough to be eligible Tuesday), play it like you would've Friday (take your scheduled starter far as he can go), or start their #2's and save #1's for Tuesday. Either way the skippers elect to play it aces would be eligible to throw Saturday if the winner were to get thru Sonora and reach a final.

Seth Spencer (San Diego State Signee) is the Cougars ace sporting a 7-2 record and 1.13 ERA in 55 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings worked with 83 strikeouts to 28 walks and a .121 opponent batting average. At the plate he's hitting .275 with seven extra base hits. Adan Delgado threw six inning of two hit baseball in Tuesday's second round to earn the win with 11 strikeouts and 2 walks. Ben Vizcarra leads the offense with a .373 batting average and four extra base hits. Three other Cougars sport averages of .300 or better. Canyon Springs held the division's number one poll ranking until an 0-3 week in Ivy League play with two losses to Paloma Valley & one against Temescal Canyon in a Saturday morning rain makeup game dropped them three spots.

Alhambra has recorded 61 extra base hits in 2019 (48 doubles, 6 triples, and 7 home runs) led by Diego Moran's .512 average and 13 extra base hits (7 doubles, 2 hits, 4 HR's). His 6-2 record with a 1.65 ERA and 85 K's to 28 walks also lead the Moors pitching staff. Opponents are hitting just .171 against the junior.

Division 4>>

#6 Kennedy @ #2 Summit Tuesday 315pm

Summit was the area's first team to punch their ticket into Tuesday's semifinals doing so during the 3pm hour as they had an early 130pm start to Friday's quarterfinal game at Mary Star (Camino Real T2). Chris Enriquez threw a complete game with 5 K's and allowed just one hit while going 2-3 at the plate. Andrew Rodriguez went 1-3 with 2 RBI in the win. Thru three games their postseason scoring margin is 11-5. To get here the Skyhawks have recorded one run wins against Montclair (Mount Baldy 3rd place) & La Sierra (River Valley T1) in addition to Friday's win in San Pedro.

Meanwhile Kennedy has an impressive 22-5 postseason scoring margin in wins against Mayfair (Suburban 2nd place), Carter (Citrus Belt T2), and Loara (Garden Grove champ). Thru 31 games Wyatt Johnson has an impressive .429 batting average with eight extra base hits and a 12-1 record on the mound. In 80 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings of work he has 102 strikeouts to 19 walks and allowed eight extra base hits (just 55 total) with nine complete games. He has a 2-1 victory in early February against Arlington with 9 strikeouts, 1 walk, and just 4 hits allowed to his credit. Arlington missed the postseason show in 2019.

Division 5>>

#1 Poly/Pasadena @ #6 Rancho Verde Tuesday 315pm

Two Val Verde Unified School District teams found their way to the division five semifinals and are just one win away from a date on Saturday afternoon at UC Riverside. If the Mustangs are to end up on that stage they'll first have to go thru defending division six champion Pasadena Poly. Rancho Verde's cumulative scoring margin in the postseason is 22-11 in postseason wins against Big Bear (3rd place Cross Valley League), Ramona (River Valley League champion), and Rialto (3rd place San Andreas League). Just like the Panthers however they have not faced a ranked team on their road to Tuesday's game. They started the season 12-0 before losing six in a row (three in Sunbelt League play) and since that point have won ten straight. Thru the 24 games which MaxPreps has stats for Roberto Inzunza's .386 batting average with seven extra base hits leads the offense. Expect UC Riverside signee Alex Banuelos to get the ball in this one. He is 7-2 with a 2.55 ERA and has 71 strikeouts to 25 walks with opponents hitting just .202 against him.

Meanwhile for Pasadena Poly the Panthers haven't missed a beat despite jumping one division after winning last year's division six title by defeating Moreno Valley 6-1 at UC Riverside. Nick Wagner took over as skipper and Poly won the Prep League with an undefeated 12-0 record. Their postseason scoring margin is 14-1 but they also have not faced a seeded team so far. They've defeated Coachella Valley (4th place Desert Valley League), Santa Paula (Citrus Coast League champion), and Estancia (Orange Coast League champion) to get here.

Division 5>>

Xavier Prep @ Orange Vista Tuesday 315pm

This semifinal features a couple of unranked teams according to the division five coaches poll. Orange Vista entered as the Sunbelt League's 2nd place team and posted a cumulative 9-4 scoring margin in wins over Jurupa Valley (River Valley 3rd place), #2 Dunn (Coast Valley League champ), and Salesian (Camino Real T2). Alex Hernandez hits .340 to lead the Coyotes offense in games where stats were recorded to MaxPreps. Starting pitcher Leo Diaz has a 2.27 ERA to lead the pitching staff with 21 strikeouts to 18 walks and an opponent batting average of .319.

Xavier Prep ,the Desert Empire League 3rd place team, defeated #3 Indio (Desert Valley League champ), Flintridge Prep (Prep League 2nd place), and #7 Century (Orange 2nd place) to get here. Jordan Ruiz is hitting .403 to lead the Knights offense while Seth Mattox is 7-4 with a 1.05 ERA in 86 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings of work with 119 strikeouts to 24 walks. Opponents are hitting just .169 against the sophomore. Their postseason scoring margin is 10-4.

Division 6>>

Calvary Murrieta @ Costa Mesa Tuesday 315pm

We were also so close to an all area semifinal here but Costa Mesa rallied late for a 5-3 victory over Vista del Lago (Mountain Valley League #3) in the quarterfinals. Calvary Murrieta put up 33 runs in Friday's victory over El Monte (Mission Valley T2) and also knocked out #5 Adelanto (Desert Sky League T1) & Anza Hamilton (Arrowhead League T2) on their road to the semifinals. Their cumulative postseason scoring margin is 48-9 so far. Brandon Baker's .543 batting average with 16 extra base hits leads the Warrior offense. On the mound he leads the staff with a 2.79 ERA in 47 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings of work recording 69 strikeouts to 29 walks and opponents are hitting .222 against him.

Costa Mesa's postseason scoring margin is 21-6 with additional wins over de Toledo (Liberty League T2) and Webb (Academy #1) in the first and second rounds. Kyle Anderson's .444 batting average with 5 doubles leads the Mustangs offense. In 11 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings of postseason work Cameron Chapman has allowed 12 hits and 3 runs while recording 14 strikeouts.

Times and dates for all baseball and softball finals will be announced on Wednesday morning.

