

## **Inland Sports HS Volleyball Preview:**

By: Derryl Trujillo  
Inland Sports Senior Writer

It seems like the 2018-2019 school year just ended but it's time to begin looking at the upcoming volleyball season for our area high schools.

### **Looking Back:**

It was a very successful campaign for our area's teams. Temecula Valley (D1) & Ontario Christian (D3) claimed CIF-State tournament titles. The Knights also claimed a D5 CIF-SS Championship and Linfield Christian made it an Ambassador League twofer in section crowns by winning a D7 title. Rancho Christian (D8) reached the title game in Jim Downey's first year at the helm but fell to perennial power Faith Baptist of Canoga Park while Paloma Valley was runner up in D5.

### **Last Year's Award Winners:**

Small Schools Players of the Year: Devin Sivertson, Linfield Christian & Annaka Jorgenson, Ontario Christian  
Small Schools Coaches of the Year: Eric Hawes, Linfield Christian & Paige Liebhart, Ontario Christian  
Public Schools Player of the Year: Jordyn Amoy, Temecula Valley  
Public Schools Coach of the Year: Rafu Rodriguez, Temecula Valley

### **A Look Ahead:**

Let's start with a look at the calendar for this upcoming season

Queen's Court: Saturday August 15 & Sunday August 16  
First Day of Competition: Monday August 17  
Transfer sit out period ends: Tuesday September 17  
Last Day of League Competition: Thursday October 17  
Last Day of Non League Contests: Saturday October 19  
Playoffs:  
Tuesday October 22 (Wildcard)  
Thursday October 24 (Rd 1)  
Saturday October 26 (Rd 2)  
Wednesday October 30 (Quarterfinals)  
Friday November 2 (Semifinals)  
CIF-SS Finals>>November 8&9 (Friday & Saturday)

It's the second year of this compressed calendar and Murrieta Valley coach Ann Romero-Parks remarked, "I think we'll all feel more comfortable with the compressed season after this year. Last year it was something new to throw at us and we had to get our arms around scheduling with it. Now we understand it and how to plan best for our programs."

Meanwhile Ontario Christian's Paige Liebhart remarked about a shorter season "I like the schedule this way now. It's nice to end our season before the holidays get underway. In the past we'd finish a season and next day be out unloading Christmas trees for our family lot, talk about exhausting."

### **New Faces in New Places:**

It's another new class of head coaches in the Southwestern League as Mark Motluck (GO), Rafu Rodriguez (TV) and Tiffani Thunstrom (Mesa) all resigned this offseason. Replacing them will be Laikin Ramirez (GO), Dennis Palpallatoc (TV), and Neemias Costa (Mesa).

### **Some Stories to Watch:**

\*1. Sharks Big VIII League Streak- Can anyone end Santiago's 76 match Big VIII League winning streak?

\*2. Bulldogs Mountain Pass League title streak- Hemet enters the season winners of nine consecutive Mountain Pass League volleyball championships. Will the Bulldogs make it ten or can Beaumont knock them from that perch?

\*3. Southwestern League youth- A total of 40 senior volleyball players (6-GO, 10-VM, 6-Mesa, 5-Chaparral, 8-TV, 5-MV) graduated from the 6 Murrieta & Temecula public schools in 2019. What does that mean for the upcoming year? Very likely that the league title will come down to which school's underclassmen & returners put things together very quickly. Romero-Parks remarked, "There's a lot of great volleyball players down here. When a senior graduates there's always a junior or underclassmen who sat behind that senior learning and waiting for her shot."

\*4. Small Schools Success-Can Ontario Christian, Linfield Christian, and Rancho Christian follow up incredible 2018 seasons in 2019? All three graduated some key pieces but have enough coming back to make at least a decent run in October. Without a league to call home Rancho Christian will have to play a freelance schedule until the next CIF-SS Small School Releaguings Cycle in three years.

### **Tournament Dates to Watch:**

Here's a list of some of the top tournaments in our area>>listed in no random order.

Freeway Games Girls Volleyball Invitational- 9/20 & 9/21

This is a new event put together by Santiago coach Courtney Krueger with support from Big VIII counterparts Centennial (Ivan Hernandez) & Roosevelt (Patty Zarate). A preliminary look at the field finds Paloma Valley, Heritage, Murrieta Valley, REV, La Sierra, and Yucaipa among some of the notable teams joining this event.

Hemet- 8/24

Chaparral has won back to back titles at the corner of Stetson & Stanford. Can the Pumas make it a three-peat or will one of the other teams from a solid field put together by Bulldogs coach Joe Schnecke prevail?

REV- 10/5

Ontario Christian looks to defend their title from a year ago in the final tournament test before CIF-SS playoffs begin.

### **Dates to Watch: Nonleague**

8/20>>Great Oak @ Santiago 430pm

Laikin Ramirez makes her debut as Wolfpack head coach in this matchup between two of the area's stronger volleyball powers. Meanwhile we get an early look at Santiago preparing for a Big VIII League title defense but losing Erin Anderson, Kayla Pronio, Lauren Rasmussen, and Kiki Metcalf to graduation.

8/20>>Heritage @ Paloma Valley 430pm

It's the Menifee Bowl (volleyball style) just 6 days into a new season. Both programs made deep postseason runs a season ago. Paloma Valley fell in the D5 CIF-SS title match & earned a state tournament berth falling in both rounds to Ontario Christian. Meanwhile Heritage made it to a CIF-SS D6 quarterfinal before falling to Beaumont.

8/27>>Rancho Christian @ Linfield Christian 600pm

Last year Linfield Christian swept this matchup of finalists from a season ago. Key thing to watch for in this match will be how the Lions replace their dynamic duo of Kelly Rausch & Kenzie Phelps who both graduated.

8/27>>Ontario Christian @ Santiago 430pm

We've got a matchup between the defending CIF-State D3/Section D5/Ambassador League champion and defending Big VIII League champion just 13 days into the new campaign. It's an early test for both sides but more so the Sharks who suffered massive losses to graduation.

9/5>>Hemet @ Paloma Valley 430pm

About twenty minutes separate these two league champions from 2018 looking for an early season test. Both sides took significant losses to graduation but still have high expectations for the coming season.

### **Leagues to Watch:**

Ambassador- Linfield Christian & Ontario Christian both reached title weekend a season ago bringing home the championship hardware. The road to a title likely goes through one of these two programs especially with Eliana Chavira graduating Aquinas and moving onto Long Beach State. Ontario Christian is in a great position to not only repeat their league championship of a season ago but make another deep postseason run, this year in D3. They'll return Peyton Tazelaar, Jenna Holmes, Selena Balderas, and Giselle Vogel among the notables. Linfield Christian returns Devin Sivertson, Paige Williams, Sarah Newman and Sam Hohulin among their notables.

Big VIII- Santiago loses their top two hitters, starting setter, and libero from a season ago. They leave with the league winning streak at 76 wins. Their closest competitor these last few years has been King and coach Kyle Duncan should have another solid side in 2019. The Wolves return Breonne Benoit & Kali Vandenburg who both posted 1.6 kills per set. Longtime Centennial coach Krista Dupas resigned and Ivan Hernandez took the controls of Husky volleyball.

Citrus Belt League- Each of the tri champions graduated a key senior or seniors from last year in Danielle Lilley (Citrus Valley), Jenna Patton (REV), and Julianne Leclair (Yucaipa). Looking at stats it appears Redlands East Valley is in a favorable position to repeat last year's CBL title as Citrus Valley and Yucaipa both took significant losses to graduation.

Mountain Pass League- Hemet graduated 9 seniors who won league titles all four years of their high school careers and reached three straight elite eights. Setters Jacy Goldbach & Mia Adkins are back for the Bulldogs along with Katelyn Sonnier & Jaden Cordova. Meanwhile at Beaumont 11 seniors graduated, including their top three hitting options (Kylie Coon, Miranda Gates, and Sabrina Garces) along with starting setter Molly Watson. It looks as if this will be another league where youth will reign supreme in the quest for a league title.

Ivy- Paloma Valley is the defending champion here and likely favorite to repeat in 2019. The Wildcats will add Cal Poly San Luis Obispo commit Liz Markovska (Heritage) on September 17th. She'll join an offense that will feature Gabby Hollins & Jayde Shelton returning from last year's CIF-SS runner up side along with setter Olivia Karwin. Kim Collins returns as Notre Dame head coach after Maikel Bastida took the job at Serrano.

Southwestern- Vista Murrieta is the defending champion but lost ten seniors to graduation, most in this league. With the amount of seniors who graduated last year plus three new coaches I don't think one can offer a responsible prediction on this league until a couple weeks into regular season play.

### **2019-2020 CIF-SS Playoff Divisions:**

D1/D2>> Chaparral, Great Oak, King, Murrieta Mesa, Murrieta Valley, Santiago/Corona, Temecula Valley, Vista Murrieta

(For the purposes of weekly CIF-SS Coaches Polling these two divisions will be considered one until playoff pairings are released. At that point a committee picks the 16 teams who will comprise D1, while those remaining qualified teams are D2. Think of it as an Open Division without pulling teams out of their natural divisions to create it.)

D3>> Citrus Valley, Ontario Christian, Paloma Valley, Redlands East Valley, Roosevelt, Yucaipa

D4>> Cajon, Centennial/Corona, Hemet, Norco

D5>> Aquinas, Beaumont, Carter, Corona, Elsinore, Heritage, North, Notre Dame/Riverside, Poly/Riverside, Redlands, Rim of the World, Woodcrest Christian

D6>> Fontana, Jurupa Valley, La Sierra, Linfield Christian, Loma Linda Academy, AB Miller, Patriot, Rancho Verde, Rialto, Summit, Temescal Canyon, Valley View, West Valley/Hemet, Western Christian

D7>> Arlington, Arrowhead Christian, Banning, Citrus Hill, Desert Christian Academy, Eisenhower, Grand Terrace, Hillcrest, Jurupa Hills, Kaiser, Lake Arrowhead Christian, Moreno Valley, Norte Vista, Orange Vista, Perris, Ramona, Rancho Christian, San Geronimo, San Jacinto, Tahquitz, Vista del Lago

D8>> Arroyo Valley, Bloomington Christian, Bloomington, Cal Lutheran, CSDR, Canyon Springs, Colton, Indian Springs, La Sierra Academy, Lakeside, Rubidoux, San Jacinto Valley Academy, Santa Rosa Academy, United Christian Academy

D9>> Baypoint Prep Academy, Bethel Christian/Riverside, CMI, Cornerstone/Wildomar, Crossroads/Corona, Desert Chapel, Grove, Hamilton, Mesa Grande Academy, Noli Indian, Nuview Bridge, Packinghouse Christian, Public Safety Academy, Redlands Adventist Academy, River Springs/Hemet & Temecula Campuses, River Springs/Magnolia, Riverside County Education Academy, San Bernardino, Sherman Indian, Temecula Prep

**Coaches Corner: Paige Liebhart (Ontario Christian)**

It was a historical season for Lady Knights volleyball in 2018 earning both the CIF-SS D5 championship and a CIF-State D3 title along with an impressive 39-2 overall record and Ambassador League championship. As preparations for 2019 are underway I had a chance to catch up with coach Paige Liebhart to reflect on 2018 and look forward at the upcoming season.

Note: DT are my questions and PL her responses.

DT: Nearly 9 months removed from the Section and State title matches what do you remember most about last year? How long did it take before you finally got an offseason and opportunity to reflect on what this group accomplished?

PL: After the 2018 season we were obviously excited but also exhausted. It took awhile to catch up on much needed rest, but after the holidays we finally had our banquet. Then everything came back to us and we were truly able to celebrate with friends and family. From there it seemed like every few weeks something new happened (state senator Connie Leyva visited campus and presented us with certificates, we were honored by the Ontario City Council at a meeting, the Walk of Champions at Angel Stadium, and banners/rings arriving in the spring). Honestly our last event was four weeks before 2019 tryouts, so the offseason was quite short.

DT: If you've had your squad together yet-Has the switch flipped among your returners from last year to this year? How would you describe their mindset, defending a title or winning another?

PL: Our tryouts were two weeks ago and we've had a few practices but I think the girls are coming in hungry for more. Once you get a taste of winning on that stage it's only natural to want more. We know we're in D3 now so there are a few more things we have to work on, however our goals are very similar to last year.

DT: You've significantly upgraded the non league schedule these last several years (Santiago, King, Norco, and Rancho Cucamonga matches with tourneys at Dave Mohs and REV this year). How beneficial will that be come October especially playing in an Ambassador League that's quite bottom heavy?

PL: We know we have to see more D3/D4 teams early on this season in preparation for the playoffs. I don't like entering that time of year without seeing the competition so this schedule will do just that for us. We're also excited to play those D1/D2 teams as well and really test ourselves against some of Southern California's best. Three Big VIII League matches plus Rancho Cucamonga will certainly give us some things to work on and show where we stand.

DT: Your thoughts on the two division bump and how helpful it will be to have most of last year's team back as D3 will likely be the Lady Knights home for some time?

PL: We knew a move was coming so it wasn't much of a shock to the system. Having most of our title winning team from last year back is huge. We are a small school which doesn't recruit so that type of experience is huge especially in the higher divisions. It's also nice to have players back who know my system so we don't have to start over on day one. Basically our first few practices were an extension of last season.

DT: Ambassador League coaches are a close knit group no matter the sport. How quickly after winning those championship games did you receive messages of congratulations from everyone else who wasn't in attendance?

PL: Ambassador League coaches are the best out there. Not only are they incredibly knowledgeable but genuinely nice people. I got messages within hours to a day after each title game. Some of them even made matches and it was so nice to have their support.

**Players to Watch:**

Note-Teams and players listed in no random order.

Ontario Christian>> Peyton Tazelaar, Jenna Holmes, Giselle Vogel & Selena Balderas  
Santiago/Corona>> Bella Mouzakis & Xenia Villagomez  
Paloma Valley>> Olivia Karwin, Gabby Hollins, Jayde Shelton & Liz Markovska  
Rancho Christian>> Emily Vaniman, Amirah Ali, Brooklynn Thomas & Olivia Trevithick  
Linfield Christian>> Paige Williams, Sam Hohulin, Devin Sivertson & Sarah Newman  
Vista Murrieta>> Juliette Russell & Molly Wilson  
Temecula Valley>> Hailey Hinkel & Emma Rhodes  
REV>> Jordan Cherniss, Ozzie Ozonoh & Rian Tibbets  
Citrus Valley>> Jacquelyn Barrett  
Yucaipa>> Jade Phillips & Savannah Simmons  
La Sierra>> Pualeilani Tata & Dina Romero