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Bishop Montgomery opens season atop SoCal Top 25

Written on November 20, 2016 by [Frank Burlison](#)

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LAGUNA NIGUEL, Ca. – The 2016-17 Southern California high school basketball season is off and at 'em Monday, with the first's week's action highlighted by the 65th Pacific Shores Tournament at Redondo Union High in Redondo Beach that tips off Monday afternoon.

Leading the way in the Top 25 are, to little surprise, are Bishop Montgomery, Sierra Canyon, Mater Dei and Chino Hills – interesting enough, the four programs that made up the semifinals of last season's CIF Southern Section Open Division playoffs.

Chino Hills, of course, rolled the field – heck, it rolled all but a few of its foes en route to a 35-0 record that also brought State Open Division championship hardware to campus along with a “mythical” (labeled the national champions by various Internet sites, notably Ball Is Life and USA Today).

With **Lonzo Ball** running roughshod over college teams with UCLA in the same fashion he dominated the high school scene at Chino Hills, the races for Southern Section and State Open crowns are certainly going to be a lot tighter than they were last season.

The first strong group of potential Southern Section and L.A. City championship contenders at one site will be found at Redondo High this week, where BurlisonOnBasketball Top 25 selections Long Beach Poly, Santa Margarita, Birmingham, Eastvale Roosevelt, Oak Park, Redondo, Lynwood, Harvard-Westlake, Rancho Christian and Westchester are part of the Pac Shores' 16-team bracket.

Games in the 16-team bracket get underway at 3 p.m. on Monday, with a battle of Top 25 squads Birmingham (No. 11) and Rancho Christian (21).

PRESEASON SOCAL TOP 25

(includes programs from the CIF Southern, L.A. City and San Diego sections)

Meet Frank

Frank Burlison is a well-regarded basketball writer who was inducted into the U.S. Basketball Writers Association Hall of Fame in 2005. His opinions on the potential of high school and college players are widely respected and sought by college coaches and NBA scouts, personnel directors and general managers from coast to coast. Oh, yes – he can offer plenty of thoughts on movies, television and pop music. Yes, he can rank those, too. Hint: He's a big The Godfather, Larry Sanders, The Wire and The Beatles loyalist.



To learn more about Frank's scouting services, [click here](#).

Endorsements

“I've known Frank since he was a student at Long Beach State and no writer ever worked harder at studying and understanding basketball. When I was coaching I always put more stock into what he said about (high school) players than anyone I knew. As far as I'm concerned, he's the best there is at evaluating the potential of basketball players.”

Lute Olson, Hall of Fame and NCAA Championship Winning Coach

“I have known Frank for 15 years and there is no one outside of those in the Clippers' organization that I trust more than Frank when it comes to player evaluations.”

Neil Olshey, Portland Trail Blazers' General Manager

“Frank Burlison has always been a proponent of my talent and, even more so, of my potential – far before it was evident to most. Even as a smaller and determined player who was being overlooked by most high-major colleges and national scouting services, Frank always served as a friendly voice who got me into the door to most events to help me prove my talents.”

Russell Westbrook, the No. 4 overall selection in the 2008 NBA Draft out of UCLA and an all-star guard for the Oklahoma City Thunder

To see what other people in basketball are saying about Frank, [click here](#).

1. **Bishop Montgomery** (Southern Section) 28-3

FB SAYS: The Knights five starters, including D-I signees **Ethan Thompson** (Oregon State) and **Jordan Schakel** (SDSU), and sophomore point guard **Gianni Hunt** is vastly improved.

2. **Sierra Canyon** (SS) 27-5

FB SAYS: **Marvin Bagley III** is due to finally make his debut for **Ty Nichols'** program on Nov. 28. With the group of guys he is joining (three D-I signees, including **Cody Riley** to UCLA), this is a team capable of going unbeaten.

3. **Mater Dei** (SS) 27-5

FB SAYS: The Monarchs have the strongest junior class in SoCal, led by all-Southern Section point guard **Spencer Freedman**.

4. **Chino Hills** (SS) 35-0

FB SAYS: Four starters return from the most dominant team California has seen in many, many years. But the one starter lost – **Lonzo Ball** – was the National Player of the Year and will be an NBA lottery selection in late June. Yes . . . big loss.

5. **Fairfax** (L.A. City Section) 30-5

FB SAYS: **Steve Baik** moves over from Chino Hills to replace **Harvey Kitani** who “retired” and is now at Rolling Hills Prep. This program has the best group of underclass guards in SoCal.

6. **Crespi** (SS) 33-4

FB SAYS: Two consecutive state titles for Coach **Russell White**. This team isn't going to be this good early and won't ever be if junior guard **Brandon Williams** doesn't bounce back to near full speed after the knee injury he suffered last June.

7. **Cathedral Catholic** (San Diego Section) 21-7

FB SAYS: **Brandon McCoy** is the best center in the western U.S. and could get his club back into the State Southern Open playoffs (where it stunned Sierra Canyon last March) once more before heading off to his (likely) one season in college.

8. **Corona Centennial** (SS) 23-9

FB SAYS: Can a program lose two D-I players and *still* improve? In this case, it's quite possible.

9. **Long Beach Poly** (SS) 24-11

FB SAYS: State D-II runner-up can put of the tallest frontcourt in SoCal. But, as it seemingly always the case with the Jackrabbits, can get they enough consistent jump shooting to threaten what figure to be the “Big Four” in the SS Open Division?

10. **Santa Margarita** (SS) 18-12

FB SAYS: Is this the year the Eagles dethrone Mater Dei in the Trinity League? That's still a dicey proposition but they could be good enough to win two SS Open games.

11. Birmingham (LACS) 22-10

FB SAYS: Even after Birmingham's L.A. City and regional playoff success of last spring, seniors **Deschon Winston** and **Devante Doutrive**, amazingly enough, are still underrated relative to some other top-notch players.

12. St. Augustine (SDS) 24-8

FB SAYS: Some key losses but 6-foot-8 **Taeshon Cherry** is a future major college power forward.

13. Eastvale Roosevelt (SS) 23-9

FB SAYS: **Jemarl Baker** and **Matt Mitchell** – enough said, more or less.

14. Oak Park (SS) 28-7

FB SAYS: Juniors **Riley Battin** and **Wesley Slajchert** will help last season's SS 3AA champions relocate into the SS Open Division playoffs in February.

15. Foothills Christian (SDS) 25-5

FB SAYS: McDonald's AA **T.J. Leaf** is at UCLA but he's been replaced by another likely future McDonald's AA and definite Bruin-to-be in guard **Jaylen Hands**.

16. Santa Monica (SS) 30-3

FB SAYS: Vikings' Coach **Jim Hecht** hit pay dirt with a couple of terrific junior transfers which mean last spring's SS 1A champions will get a taste of the SS's Open Division when the next playoffs brackets are unveiled in February.

17. Alemany (SS) 24-9

FB SAYS: Some big (and wide) transfers up front will team with a strong perimeter led by seniors **Ernie Sears** and future UCSB Gaucho **Brandon Davis**.

18. Lynwood (SS) 23-7

FB SAYS: The SS 2A runner-up program when hard and fast with its tourney (Pac Shores, Tarkanian Classic and The Classic at Damien) schedule.

19. Redondo (SS) 28-7

FB SAYS: Last season's seniors **Morgan Means** (Seattle) and **Leland Green** (Hawaii) are starting as college freshmen but **Reggie Morris Jr.** (now an assistant at Loyola Marymount) left former assistant Coach **Vic Martin** a terrific backcourt in **Ryse Williams** and **Jailen Moore**.

20. Harvard-Westlake (SS) 27-8

FB SAYS: Sensational sophomore **Cassius Stanley** has been joined by the state's best freshman class.

21. Rancho Christian (SS) 23-12

FB SAYS: Sophomore **Isaiah Mobley** is joined by his equally gifted and nearly as tall freshman sibling, **Evan Mobley**.

22. **Westchester** (SS) 26-7

FB SAYS: Lacking in size but certainly not in determination and tradition.

23. **Damien** (SS) 25-6

FB SAYS: Not much size or depth but a lot of guys are around who can hit shots, including senior **Justin Hemsley** (the brother of SDSU's **Jeremy Hemsley**) and Chino Hills transfer **Cameron Shelton**.

24. **Etiwanda** (SS) 20-10

FB SAYS: There is a deep bunch of guards on the Eagles' roster who defend and can drive by people, lickety-split

25. **St. John Bosco** (SS) 21-10

FB SAYS: Season II of the **Matt Dunn** Era brings a team capable of cracking the top three in the oh-so-tough Trinity League.

Ten more (alpha listing): Edison 24-9, Camarillo 25-7, Crossroads 12-17, JSerra 18-11, La Mirada 24-8, Los Alamitos 25-7, Los Altos 24-4, Narbonne 25-8, Serra 19-15 and Windward 11-17.

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