

Fryer on basketball: North/South Challenge still going strong

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The Orange County North/South Challenge was started in 2002 as a one-day event that brought together four teams from north county to play four south-county teams at El Toro High.

The North-South Challenge became a two-day showcase a few years later. This week, the 18th North/South Challenge is an 11-game, 22-team event at El Toro High on Thursday and Friday.

Schedule changes for the North/South Challenge were made late Monday. Orangewood Academy now is Dana Hills' opponent on Friday, and Saddleback Valley Christian vs. Pacifica Christian, featuring two of Orange County's leading scorers (see below) was added to the Friday schedule.

The schedule for Thursday (South team listed first): Laguna Hills vs. Valencia, 2 p.m.; Laguna Beach vs. Woodbridge, 3:30 p.m.; Trabuco Hills vs. Northwood, 5 p.m.; Aliso Niguel vs. Huntington Beach, 6:30 p.m.; Capistrano Valley vs. Los Alamitos, 8 p.m.

Friday's schedule (South team listed first): Saddleback Valley Christian vs. Pacifica Christian, 12:30 p.m.; San Clemente vs. Westminster, 2 p.m.; Dana Hills vs. Orangewood Academy, 3:15 p.m.; San Juan Hills vs. Godinez, 5 p.m.; Tesoro vs. El Dorado, 6:30 p.m.; El Toro vs. Cypress, 8 p.m.

Admission per day is \$7 for adults, \$5 for students and children ages 5-13, and free for children under 5.

Jump stops around O.C. basketball ...

• Mater Dei advanced to the championship game of the Tarkanian Classic's Platinum Division in which the Monarchs, No. 7 in USA Today's national rankings, will play national No. 6 Chino Hills on Tuesday in the division's championship game. [Spencer Freedman](#) scored 26 points and [Justice Sueing](#) added 25 for Mater Dei in a comeback win Monday over Bishop Gorman of Las Vegas.

• Santa Margarita's annual Christmas Classic tournament begins Tuesday. Santa Margarita, No. 10 in CalHiSports.com's California top 25, is the only Orange County team in the eight-team tournament. The tournament championship game is Friday at 2 p.m.

• The Orange Holiday Classic starts Monday at Hope University in Fullerton. O.C. top 10 teams Edison and Esperanza are in it, as is North Orange County Championships winner La Mirada. The tournament championship game is Dec. 29 at 8:30 at Hope.


• The Leon Davis Classic tournament at Whittier Christian begins Dec. 26. Buena Park and Whittier Christian are the O.C. schools in that one. The championship game is Dec. 29 at 6 p.m. at Whittier Christian.

• Godinez won the Loatella Tournament. The Grizzlies defeated Pacifica, 54-51, in the tournament championship game Saturday at Loara. Godinez senior guard **Ramon Lopez-Felix** was named tournament



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Players

Players of the week

MVP.

• Sonora lost to La Mirada, 62-58, Saturday at Sonora in the championship game of the North Orange County Championships. Capistrano Valley lost to St. John Bosco in the North Orange County championships third-place game. Capo and Bosco play each other Feb. 4 at the Nike Extravaganza.

• El Toro defeated Tesoro, 50-49, in overtime Saturday in the SoCal Elite Sports/Gary Raya tournament championship game. The Chargers’ [Maxx Hazely](#) was tournament MVP. JSerra beat Northwood in the third-place game.

• Buena Park beat Laguna Beach, 58-50, Saturday in the Charlie Wilkins Memorial tournament championship game. Buena Park’s [Gianni Michael](#) was tournament MVP. Corona del Mar beat Los Alamitos, 57-41, in the tournament third-place game. (Corona del Mar shot 43 percent from the field compared to Los Alamitos’ 25 percent.)

• Villa Park sophomore [Julien Franklin](#) scored 33 points Saturday in the Spartans’ win over Palo Verde of Las Vegas in the Tarkanian Classic at Las Vegas.

• Servite senior forward [Jacob Lord](#) committed to Concordia University-Wisconsin.

• Top five O.C. leading scorers: **Blake Burzell**, Laguna Beach, 30.3 points per game; [Trey Smith](#), Saddleback Valley Christian 29.8; **Romulo Howard**, Savanna, 27.3; **Dominick Harris**, Pacifica Christian, 24.1; Lopez-Felix, 23.4.

• A bit of catching up here ... Orange Lutheran’s [Chris Williams](#) scored 42 points to tie the school’s single-game record on Nov. 28 when the Lancers beat Redlands East Valley, 71-62, in the BattleZone tournament at Centennial of Corona.

• Tickets for the Nike Extravaganza, Feb. 3 and 4 at Mater Dei. are on sale at the Mater Dei athletics ticket window and boys basketball office. Among the games on Saturday are Oak Hill Academy of Virginia, which is No. 2 in USA Today’s national rankings, vs. Chino Hills. Also Saturday, Santa Margarita plays state No. 5 Fairfax and national No. 3 Sierra Canyon of Chatsworth plays Bishop Gorman.

• The CIF-Southern Section released its boys basketball preseason rankings last week. The next CIF-SS poll is released Jan. 9. That one will include the first Open Division “watch list,” which is a group of teams that at the time are considered candidates for the Open Division.

Contact the writer: sfryer@scng.com

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Girls basketball
athlete of the week:
Cassidy Stevens,
Foothill



Boys basketball
athlete of the week:
Blake Burzell,
Laguna Beach



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Poll

OCVARSITY.COM POLL

What do you think of the new CIF-SS football playoff system?

- ☐ It's too early to tell.
- ☐ From what I have seen so far, I don't like it.
- ☐ I like it a lot. This is a better system than the old one.
- ☐ I hate it. They ruined the playoffs.
- ☐ My team got in. I love it!!
- ☐ My team didn't make it. It's a lousy system.
- ☐ Football? I'm just waiting for basketball to start.
- ☐ I love the football playoffs. The best teams get in. The best teams win.

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