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Short-Term Memory All That's Needed for Realignment

By Les Willsey, azpreps365.com

Trying to make heads or tails of the new realignment for the 2015-2016 athletic season? Don't strain yourself.

The revamped alignment is only good for this year. It will be redone for a two-year block later this school year for 2016-2018. We're talking football only here since that's what this digital magazine is all about. Everything will be redone by next spring.

Here's what has taken place with the new alignment. Seventy-seven of 228 schools competing in football are now in a new division — 18 moved up a division and 59 moved down one or in a few cases two. That's one-third of the schools. And on the surface and likely will be borne out, it levels the playing field as much as it can.

The one-year block is a great avenue to test-run divisions for the coming two-year block. Division I should be larger, but it gives programs like Desert Mountain, Corona del Sol, Gilbert and perhaps some of the Mesa schools a chance to reboot and return to the highest level of play. I don't care for the playoff formula that allows 16 of the 17 schools to reach postseason. But I understand the coaches' sentiment that if you're bold enough to compete in the toughest division why not get a playoff game at the end. The downside is stigma that could be attached to the team not qualifying. If I was calling the shots, 12 teams would make the playoffs with the top four drawing a first-round bye.

The gold nugget in the alignment is grouping sister schools, for the most part, in the same sections. Phoenix Union schools are all in one section — long overdue. They can compete at a manageable level in D-III and their top teams should be able to compete with the best in D-III. Maryvale, Carl Hayden, Trevor Browne should never be matching up with Chandler or Mountain Pointe in this day and age. The sections are small enough to allow old and new rivals outside of their section to play one another.

When the dust settles after this year my preference is to be a little more harsh (discerning) on allowing teams to stay where they dominate or really don't belong. Not sure programs like Saguaro, Queen Creek, Williams Field don't belong in say D-I right now. I don't anticipate any of them struggling in D-II this season. Add them to the current D-I flock and some of the others taking a D-II hiatus from D-I and you'd have a legitimate D-I of around 24 schools.

The best thing from realignment should be more competitive games at all levels. Sure there will still be mismatches and blowouts. Not quite as many I hope.

Now if there can just be some clamping down on folks dead set on being mobile (non-legitimate transfers). That would be a nice complement to the competitive landscape that's trying to be leveled.

Here's a breakdown of the new set-up by division:

DIVISION I: This division is pretty simple. Only 17 schools competing for a title divided among three sections. Most of the household names from years gone by plus two D-II powerhouses in Centennial and Chaparral (hard-charging Liberty as well). The D-I players are Hamilton, Chandler, Basha and Perry (Chandler schools), Mountain Pointe and Desert Vista (Tempe/Ahwatukee),

Desert Ridge and Highland (Gilbert), Mountain View and Red Mountain (Mesa), Brophy Prep, Pinnacle and Horizon (Paradise Valley District), Chaparral (Scottsdale) and Centennial, Liberty and Boulder Creek from the Northwest Valley.

DIVISION II: It's double the size of D-I at 35 schools. A manageable total divided up in six sections. One is wholly southern Arizona schools and a second houses Marana Mtn. View, Oro Valley schools CDO and Ironwood Ridge plus Queen Creek and Poston Butte. Two sections have an East Valley flavor (Campo Verde, Marcos de Niza, Corona del Sol, Gilbert, Mesquite) in one and Dobson, Mesa High, Skyline, Westwood, Higley and Williams Field in the other. Remember them as the Tempe-Gilbert section and Mesa-Higley section. The west side of the Valley encompasses the remaining two sections.

DIVISION III: What a beast. It's home to 57 schools, nine sections and the sections range from as large as 10 to as small as 4. Three sections occupy north and west valley schools. One is all Yuma. One is southern Arizona flavored with Tucson schools, Nogales and Safford. There is a predominately East Valley section lumping Arcadia and Maricopa in with Apache Junction, Seton, McClintock and Tempe High. The 10-team section is all Metro Phoenix (Phoenix Union) schools. Another caters to northern Arizona with Bradshaw Mountain, Prescott, Flagstaff, Coconino and Mingus.

DIVISION IV: This division is much like D-II. A sound number at 42 divided among six sections. One section is northwest and western Arizona (A trio of Kingman schools, Lake Havasu, Mohave, Parker, River Valley and Wickenburg). Two sections are comprised of southern Arizona entries (one with Douglas and Thatcher bunched with Tucson teams and the other Tucson teams plus Sahuarita schools and Rio Rico). A potpourri of central Arizona schools (Casa Grande, Combs, Coolidge, Florene plus Coronado and Fountain Hills is another. (Call it the CF section — the six schools begin with C or F). Northern Arizona is represented in a section (Blue Ridge, Snowflake, Show Low, Payson, Page and Winslow). And the final section is home to another odd mix (Estrella Foothills, private schools).

DIVISION V: This one is 48 schools and eight sections. Reservation schools account for two sections (one takes in Sedona Red Rock). Southern Arizona has its own section (no Tucson schools in this one). Three sections are predominately private schools and/or charters and prep schools. One of those sections has public schools Camp Verde and Chino Valley, another has Santa Cruz and the third Antelope and Tonopah Valley. White Mountain schools Round Valley, St. Johns, Holbrook, Alchesay plus Window Rock account for one. Globe, Miami, Morenci, San Carlos and San Tan Foothills round out the D-V family.

DIVISION VI: Hasn't changed much in terms of member schools — 29 this year to start. And remember these are schools that play 8-man football. There are five sections and for the most part are geographic. Two sections of southern Arizona schools, two of central Arizona schools and one comprised of northern Arizona schools.

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Flowing Wells Counting on Dionte Flores



Dionte Flores of Tucson Flowing Wells (photo by Andy Morales of azpreps365.com)

By Andy Morales, azpreps365.com

Dionte Flores has yet to play a full season for Tucson Flowing Wells without injury.

A workhorse on both sides of the ball, the senior running back/cornerback/returner is involved on almost every single play for the Caballeros. The result has been a banged up body at times, but the rewards of having a player like Flores have more than paid off for head coach Mark Brunenkant.

"Dionte has been a very special student athlete on and off the field," Brunenkant said of his senior leader. "Obviously, he is a big part of our success. He is also the first person not to hesitate to give credit to his teammates. He's one of those rare athletes that has a unique awareness on the field on both sides of the field. He has that special ability that can turn a bad play into a successful one. (Some coaches would call that great coaching)."

Flores has been the spark that helped turned a 1-9 team into a 7-3 program on the verge of making the state playoffs last year.

In only seven full games last season, Flores gained 1,423 yards rushing with an incredible 8.2 yards per carry. He also collected 24 touchdowns in the process.

Flowing Wells sprinted out to a 6-0 record and the Caballeros

faithful had hopes of bringing back the championship teams from a generation ago but the schedule got a bit tougher and Flores saw minimal action down the stretch.

Flowing Wells finished the season 7-3, ranked 19th in their old Division III placement. There were eight 7-3 teams in that division last year and only four made the playoffs. Tucson Sabino was one of those teams and the Sabercats finished outside the top 16 but a sectional title put them in the playoffs.

A 7-3 mark is not going to guarantee a playoff spot but eight wins will, especially in the team's new Division IV placement. But Flowing Wells will need a healthy Flores along with Sr. quarterback Julio Sandoval, junior running back Dylan Valenzuela and senior receiver Tyler Stiltner to get the job done.

"I want to be able to play all 10 games this year and finish the season strong," Flores explained. "Hopefully make it to the playoffs as well. Also I wish to break my own records that I have set. My main goal is to be better than last year."

Flores knows he cannot do it alone. As his coach Brunenkant commented, he gives credit to his teammates and their work ethic.

"I believe our team has the potential to be a playoff contender this year, especially because of our lineman and the amount of work they have put in on the off season. I believe most of our success this year will consist on how well they perform in games," Flores added.

"Off the field, he's one of most polite and kind individuals you would want to meet," said Brunenkant. "He always has a smile on his face. On the field, he's one of the most fierce competitors. He doesn't like to lose."

The obvious question of playing at the next level remains. Flores had the distinction of being the fastest fifth grader in the Amphitheater School District before switching over to Flowing Wells and only time will tell if all his accomplishments lead to an offer.

"You will see a difference in us this year," he said. "We have worked hard all off season and it will show during the season. Most of all, don't sleep on us. We are coming up and will put on a show for the Flowing Wells community. Hopefully bringing back a trophy too. In 8th grade we went undefeated and now that we are seniors, our main goal is to finish the football season strong."

Other Division IV senior running backs to look out for are Goodyear Estrella Foothills standout Joe Logan and Phoenix Northwest Christian's Travis Pollay.

SOLLENBERGER HISTORY, COVER PHOTO, HOW INFO WAS COLLECTED

azpreps365.com's high school football preseason e-zine is named after Barry Sollenberger. The late walking Arizona high school sports encyclopedia used to help publish the first Arizona preseason high school football magazine to hit the stands and did so for 30-plus years.

On the cover of this year's Sollenberger e-zine is Chandler High coach Shaun Aguano and some of his players. The photo was taken by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com.

azpreps365.com's staff began sending questionnaires to Arizona high school football coaches before the 2014-15 school year ended, requesting information about their 2015 teams. The information the coaches e-mailed to us was used for this year's Sollenberger issue.

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Chandler Seeks Encore Performance in Div. I



Chandler's wide receiver N'Keal Harry (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com).

By Les Willsey, azpreps365.com

A football championship finally came Chandler High's way last season in a memorable 13-1 campaign.

It concluded with 10 consecutive victories and capped by a third win in four meetings with rival Hamilton the past two seasons. The momentum from that crown is still reverberating along Arizona Avenue.

Question now, can the experienced and fortified Wolves handle the pressure and grind of a repeat attempt as they assume the role of king of the hill in 2015?

"It will be different as the team being hunted," Chandler coach Shaun Aguano said. "It will take time to grasp it once we play. Not too long, since we open with Pinnacle and Bishop Gorman."

Division I has a half-dozen teams that may have a say in trying to prevent said repeat, but their task is going to be difficult. Aguano, beginning his fifth season as head coach with a .760 winning percentage, has the belief this team won't be denied.

"We have experience and chemistry and from that standpoint I'm confident," Aguano said. "As long as everyone's on the same page we're going to have a good year."

There are plenty of reasons to back Aguano's claim.

Seven starters return on offense. Six starters are back on defense. Add a trio of transfers with impressive resumes who at worst will increase depth, it's no wonder Aguano is amped about the Wolves.

The promise of a repeat begins with some holdovers on offense. Senior running back Chase Lucas and wide out N'Keal Harry are the marquee names. Lucas rushed for 1,126 yards and 13 touchdowns last season with six 100-yard games.

He added three more TDs as a receiver where he had 28 catches for 368 yards. Harry, who came over from Mar-

cos de Niza last season, is the top returning receiver.

Like Lucas he has recruiters salivating. Harry caught 30 passes for 657 yards and 13 TDs a year ago.

Another weapon who gets lost in the spotlight shining on Lucas and Harry is slotback Micah Reed-Campos. Reed-Campos chipped in 657 yards rushing and receiving and scored 16 TDs. He played a key role in the 28-7 victory over Hamilton in the final. Kolby Taylor wasn't too bad, either, at receiver. He caught 29 passes for 278 yards and three scores as a sophomore. The offensive line returns Dustin Woodard and Brandon Ramirez, leaving three spots to newcomers or part-timers from last season.

The "problem" for the Wolves this year is they don't have Bryce Perkins at quarterback. They'll need to get by with last year's backup— senior Mason Moran. Aguano expects Moran, an Oregon State commit, to fit in seamlessly. Moran rushed for 150 yards and was 9-for-15 passing for 217 yards and three TDs in mop-up duty in five games last year. He bided his time playing extremely well at free safety the past two seasons.

"He's a great character kid and has played quarterback since ninth grade," Aguano said of Moran. "With the guys we have around him, he doesn't have to do it all. He'll be comfortable there."

Chandler lost defensive coordinator Thurman Moore to Brophy this spring, but this year's defensive staff inherits two starters up front, two in the linebacking corps and two in the backfield. Up front are seniors Thomas Chisholm and Ian Sparrow with 28 and 26 tackles, respectively. The leading returning tackler is feisty senior inside linebacker KT Tilini (85 tackles). He's joined by junior outside backer Sam Pepper (38 tackles). Seniors in the secondary are Kyree Woods, who shifts to safety from corner and corner Isiah Swann. Both grabbed two interceptions each last season.

Aguano's concern this summer is filling the few holes Chandler has on defense. They are up front, at linebacker and in the secondary. Two transfers who started at their schools last year haven't automatically stepped in with the first unit. Defensive back-safety Teaunte Nash, who moved in from Salpointe last winter, benefitted from spring ball with the Wolves. A week before official practice began July 27, outside linebacker-rush end Hamilcar Rashed arrived from Cesar Chavez with some gaudy stats.

"The guys here last year competing for those positions aren't going to give them away," Aguano said. "Everyone has to earn their time."

Chandler will have to earn its wins early. As Aguano pointed out the first two games are against Pinnacle and Bishop Gorman. Those are followed by Chaparral and Desert Ridge. Nothing routine about that quartet of contests.

Division I Preseason Rankings

By Les Willsey, azpreps365.com

No. 1. Chandler: The Wolves get their first-ever shot at a repeat and are well-armed for the mission. Mason Moran doesn't have to match Bryce Perkins' numbers in his first shot at running the team. There are enough playmakers and fortified defense, especially with a couple of transfers, that the team will be formidable. Second game at Bishop Gorman is a great test.

No. 2. Mountain Pointe: The Pride is never short on skill players and they'll have the wherewithal to match most teams with the arrival of quarterback Jack Smith to orchestrate the offense. The wild card is play in the trenches. How those units develop the first half of the season will be key. The schedule isn't a particularly hefty one — much like last season — so learning curve can be methodical.

No. 3. Hamilton: Just a hunch, but the Huskies are likely to return to winning more with ease this year rather than so many tight finishes. Not an overwhelming array of returning starters, but depth appears as strong as ever. A confidence in junior class and seniors that worked their way to playing time last year will give Chandler enough to worry about.

No. 4. Brophy: Defense is Broncos strength out of the gate and needs to be competing in section with Chandler schools. With its defense and strong leader at quarterback in Harvard-commit Cade Knox plus quality returning skill contingent and there's plenty to be excited about. First few games aren't pushovers, but tough stretch comes in late September-early October with Desert Ridge, Hamilton and Chandler in four-week period plus a bye.

No. 5. Centennial: What can you do as the dominant team in D-II the past decade or so and entering the new season as a defending D-II champ? Try and conquer at the next level. Not easy, but not as hard as one might think. Richard Taylor's charges have made it a point to take on the likes of Hamilton, Chandler, Brophy, Basha, Mesa Mountain View, Red Mountain and Desert Vista to name a few during its D-II travails. Non-section games with Long Beach Poly, Saguaro and Hamilton are tests prior to Coyotes taking charge of their section.

No. 6. Desert Ridge: The Jaguars are established as a D-I contender year-in, year-out. Other than 2010 they haven't been able to reach beyond the semifinals. They'll be good again this year, but must prove they can beat top teams more regularly. They do play Chandler and Brophy in non-section action — results to hone in on. Likely their section title comes down to game vs. Mountain Pointe. In the last decade Desert Ridge is 5-18 against teams that have won D-I or D-II titles (Hamilton, Centennial, Chandler, Mountain Pointe, Brophy, Desert Vista and Chaparral).

No. 7. Chaparral: The Firebirds take the step up to D-I and are good enough to be a top-10 (perhaps as good as a semifinal team come November) in their new home. It won't take long to get a read on them as they play Helix (La Mesa, Calif.), Chandler and D-III power Desert Edge their first three games. Last year's team was young, battled key injuries and still managed a D-II semifinal finish. Their section title likely comes down to them and Centennial.



Chandler's versatile Chase Lucas (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com)

No. 8. Desert Vista: The Thunder were willing to take their lumps last season with a young team (a good move when three or four schools in the division are dominant). That should serve them well in 2015. Their schedule isn't overwhelming, which should help. They open with a section game Aug. 21 against Highland and have a date Sept. 4 with D-II newcomer Williams Field. Toughest games are section contests in October with Mountain Pointe and Desert Ridge.

No. 9. Red Mountain: The Mountain Lions don't back away from a rigorous schedule and haven't in recent years. They do need to win more than three games to be considered a serious title contender. Last year their three wins were against Mesa, Desert Mountain and Mesa Mtn. View (none of whom made it to post-season). Schedule is testy after first two games with non-section trio of Brophy, Hamilton, Chaparral in games 3-4-5. There is good talent coming back, enough to make this list.

No. 10. Basha: Putting points on the board shouldn't be a problem for the Bears with pass-happy QB Ryan Kelley at the helm. Defense must be better to be more than one-and-done in postseason. Last year the Bears averaged 32 points a game and gave up nearly 33 points a game. They enter the season with two starters back on defense so improving on defense with a raw group is a long shot. Only one bonafide title contender among first four opponents — Centennial (third game). Offense gets them a top-10 nod.

Football Division I Preview

By Les Willsey, azpreps365.com

SECTION I

Basha: Eight letterman return, six starters on offense and two on defense for the Bears. Basha posted 7-5 record in 2014 in coach Gerald Todd's first season at the helm. Jr. Ryan Kelley (3,108 passing yards and 30 TDs) returns to lead passing game that lost several top receivers. Sr. Hunter Gibson (590 receiving yards, 7 TDs) is top returning receiver and primed for big year. Sr. Caleb McCray is returning tackles leader at linebacker (81, 2 INTs) on a very inexperienced unit. Sr. Anthony Personale and Sr. Nick Silvestro are two offensive linemen back. Basha lost in first round of playoffs to Chandler.

Brophy Prep: Plenty of key returners on both sides of ball for coach Scooter Molander. Sr. Connor Murphy (71 tackles, 1.5 sacks), Sr. Dante Diaz-Infante (team leading 81 tackles, 3 sacks) anchor defense mentored by new coordinator Thurmond Moore (moved over from Chandler High). Sr. Walker Adams is eager to put lost season due to knee injury behind him. Adams was stellar as sophomore (team-leading 134 tackles in 2013). Sr. Cade Knox (2,306 pass-



Brophy's fine quarterback Cade Knox (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com).

ing yards 24 TDs, 439 rushing yards) is offensive leader. Sr. Ryan Velez (1,087 rushing yards, 13 TDs) and Jr. Noah Pittenger (480 rushing yards, 22 receptions, 2 TDs) ease passing pressure. Jr. Robert Brooks (312 receiving yards, 6 TDs) is the top returning receiver. Brophy posted 10-4 record last year, losing in semifinals to Hamilton.



Basha QB Ryan Kelley threw for an incredible 3,108 yards and 30 touchdowns as a sophomore in 2014 (photo by Darin Sicurello of maxpreps.com).

Hamilton: Last year the Huskies didn't overwhelm the opposition, but they were gritty and determined. That won them several close games late and they finished state runner-ups for their toil with a 12-2 record. The number of returning starters is small — three on offense and four on defense. But Hamilton's ever-present depth will likely lead to solid units on both sides of the ball. Top players for coach Steve Belles, now in his 10th season at Hamilton, on the defensive side are Sr. Garrett Rand (60 tackles, 10 sacks with 10.5 of his tackles for loss as a DT) and Sr. Emmanuel Byarm (48 tackles, 4 sacks from the line position). Sr. Kyeler Burke had gaudy numbers as WR-RB last year (976 receiving yards on 75 catches). He's switching to corner back this season and Belles figures he'll be one of the best in the state at that spot. Sr. Kaleb Pitts (381 receiving yards, 2 TDs) is also a dangerous return specialist. Belles is confident of his offensive line, defensive line and skill position spots heading into the season.

Perry: The Pumas enter this season with most of their experience up front on offense and at linebacker on defense. Skill position spots are wide open and coach Preston Jones is hoping a couple will come forward on each side of the ball. Sr. Case Hatch (141 tackles, 4 sacks) had a monster junior year and leads the defense at linebacker. So. Kenny Fultz on offense this fall. Three offensive line-

Football Division I Preview



Centennial offensive lineman Marshal Nathe (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com)

men return — Sr. Sam O'Hare, Sr. Justin Nelson and Sr. Scott Pospisil. On defense along with Hatch are Sr. Derek Wahlin, Jr. Clayton Nocella and Sr. Colton Evertsen. Perry finished 5-6 last year and lost in the opening round of the playoffs to Brophy.

SECTION II

Boulder Creek: The Jaguars put together a solid 8-3 season in coach Brandon Willard's second year as head coach. To repeat that mark the Jaguars need help in developing a few standout players beyond a couple they already have. Willard says the loss to graduation of Nathan Eldridge (OL-DL), Ryan Parenteau (WR-DB) and Blake Dawson (RB) will be tough to fill since the trio were "difference makers". There is plenty of experience with 17 starting spots still occupied by returnees. Sr. Gunther Johnson is a key. The quarterback amassed 2,272 passing yards, 26 TDs and 723 rushing yards, 8 TDs. Johnson still has Sr. Troy Reed (831 yards receiving on 47 receptions, 14 TDs) to throw to at wide out. Sr. Blake Labno (101 tackles) is back in the secondary while Sr. Scott Perry (62 tackles, 6 sacks) anchors the defensive front and Sr. Ben

Moore does the same on the offensive line. Boulder Creek bowed out in the opening round of the playoffs last year to Skyline.

Centennial: The Coyotes are stepping up to Division I after being one of the dominant teams in D-II seemingly forever. They bid farewell to D-II last year with a 12-2 record and state title in their pocket. It will be a bit of a change for Richard Taylor's team in D-I, but they've had plenty of experience facing top D-I teams over the years. Centennial has made it a point to take on the likes of Hamilton, Chandler, Brophy, Mesa Mountain View, Red Mountain and Desert Vista to name a few. Centennial enters the season strongest on the offensive line, at quarterback and linebacker. Sr. Isaac Steele (1,632 passing yards, 27 TDs and 558 rushing yards, 6 TDs) is the offensive guru at quarterback. Sr. Quenton Gomez (333 rushing yards, 4 TDs) and Jr. Taylor Fiame are ready to fill running back production. The OLine is in good stead with Sr. Marshall Nathe, Sr. Steven Bailey and Sr. Randy Rodriguez. Sr. Bozton Sanders (107 tackles, 4 sacks and 2 INTs) and Sr. John Rincon (73 tackles, 3 sacks) are a quality pair of linebackers. Sr. Chris Jules (37 tackles, 11 sacks) is a force at end.

Chaparral: If experience and maturity of the returnees combine, the Firebirds should be able to hold their own in their return to big-school competition. Coach Conrad Hamilton's team was 9-4 last year, ousted in the semis by eventual champion Centennial. A solid group of receivers are in tow to propel the offense, led by Sr. Gianni Tomasi (45 receptions for 709 yards, 14 TDs) and Sr. Christian Skeptaris (36 rec., 377 yards, 5 TDs). Sr. Ryan Bright and Jr. Mason Drake caught their share of passes as well. Jr. Grayson Barry (697 yards, 7 TDs in five games) had to step in at quarterback for injured Sean Paul Brophy and saw action mostly at playoff time. Defense is well-stocked with Jr. Parker Walton (72 tackles, 10 sacks, 6 INTs at linebacker), Sr. Brandon Jamison (79 tackles, 14.5 sacks) at end and Sr. Kurt Shughart (43 tackles) from his safety spot.

Horizon: A heavy senior-dominated team last year has the Huskies in a rebuilding mode. Nearly all Horizon's top offensive players graduated or transferred leaving coach Kris Heavner and his staff with much work to do. About 80 percent of last year's production belonged to 3,500-yard passer Dalton Sneed and his nearly 1,000 yards rushing plus a wide array of receivers. A solid duo up front on offense does return in Sr. Cameron Weller and Sr. Luke Rudolph. The defense is led by Sr. Tyler Griffin (4 sacks in



Highland's WR/TE Tyler Johnson (photo by Darin Sicurello of maxpreps.com)

limited time at end) and Sr. Kyle Sprenger (44 tackles, 3 INTs) as the team's top returnee in the secondary. An ultra inexperienced squad will have to step up big time and in a hurry in compact, competitive D-I.

Liberty: Like Horizon, Liberty faces a similar shortfall on offense with quarterback/baseball pitcher Tyler Wyatt now on to college and also faces the move up from D-II to D-I. Liberty left D-II with a runner-up trophy, falling to Centennial in the title game. New head coach Mark Smith takes on the retooling task, replacing Dan Filleman, who started the Lions' program. Smith was the Lions' defensive coordinator last season and head coach a few years back at Moon Valley. Two wide outs return for the next quarterback in Sr. Alex Jackson (773 yards receiving, 4 TDs) and Sr. Deyton Jackson (747 yards, 10 TDs). Sr. Alex Hunter is a versatile athlete and two veteran linemen Sr. Brandon Sandoval and Sr. Kyle Hinton are solid in the trenches. Top QB candidate is Sr. Kaden Kubiako. The

defense is led by Sr. Chase Hulbert (134 tackles, 9.5 sacks) from his linebacker spot.

Pinnacle: The Pioneers reached the quarterfinals last year and finished 10-2. Offensively the running game seems to be in good hands with Sr. Nick Ferrara (993 rushing yards, 10 TDs) back with familiar linemen opening holes for him — Sr. Kent Cullumber, Sr. Ben Thomas and Sr. Cole Jewell. QB Brian Lewerke is gone so settling on a replacement is one preseason question mark. So is retooling the secondary. Linebackers are in great supply with Sr. Dru Dixon (102 tackles, 7 sacks) and Sr. Justin Mandrola (95 tackles, 3 sacks) back for more action. Sr. Zach Cerepanya is back to help at receiver and in the return game as is Sr. Jeff McGuire to handle kicking and punting duties. McGuire tallied 77 points last year and made 3 of 4 field goals. Coach Dana Zupke is expecting newcomer Josh Stedman, a LB-TE, to make an impact.

SECTION III

Desert Ridge: The Jaguars won 10 of 12 games last year with both losses occurring against Brophy. Coach Jeremy Hathcock has a good nucleus returning. Not many household names, but enough solid players to be a factor. The defense is in good hands with five returning starters — Jr. Christian Allen (79 tackles at LB), Sr. DJ Davidson (57 tackles at DE), Sr. Tyler Reinhart (42 tackles at DT) and Sr. Darius Boyd (30 tackles at DE). Sr. Tate Shumway (905 passing yards, 6 TDs; 249 rushing yards) did the bulk of the quarterbacking last year and transfer Sr. Dylan Wright (Campo Verde) will compete for time behind center as well. Sr. Tavian Patrick (328 receiving yards, 4 TDs) is the top receiver back. Desert Ridge has thrived running the ball in recent years. A new stable of backs will try and continue that success. Jr. Stephan Gomez and Jr. Jacky Tenorio garnered time last year as backups.

Desert Vista: The Thunder were painfully young in 2014 and suffered the W-L end of that going 3-7. That makes experience line up in the plus column this year with nine starters back on offense and 10 who played part-time or more on defense. Many of the returnees started both ways. The Thunder are intent on pumping up offensive production, which was around 270 yards per game (total). Sr. Alex Farina (1,116 passing yards, 5 TDs) is calling the signals. Sr. Isaiah Ford (333 rushing yards, 5 TDs) is the top returning RB. Jr. Kendon Walker and Jr. Miles Wilson are top receivers back. Sr. Adrian Perez is a three-year starter up front and coach Dan Hinds figures with Sr. Zach Budzik and Sr. Torrey Hickel back with Perez the line should be a strength this year. Sr. Connor Culp is one

Football Division I Preview



Kyeler Burke, Hamilton receiver (photo by Paul Campbell of maxpreps.com)

of the top kickers in the nation and was all-state last season. Defense is led by Jr. Lelon Dillard (LB), Sr. Drew McIntyre (LB) and Jr. Chad Porter (LB)

Highland: As usual Highland scratched and clawed its way to a playoff berth last season, but lasted only one round with a loss to Pinnacle to cap a 5-6 campaign. The Hawks graduated a 2,000-yard rusher and it looks like backfield by committee will have to do in 2015. Sr. Weston Wallin (750 passing yards, 14 TDs) may be inclined to throw more. Wallin has tall, muscular receiver in Jr. Tyler Johnson (332 receiving yards, 8 TDs). Johnson doubles as a dangerous return man. Defensively Sr. Amar Sow (38 tackles, 6 sacks) is the mainstay of a unit with four returning starters. Backing Sow are Sr. Austin Cullimore (LB), Sr. Danny Toulouse (LB) and Sr. Preston Guzman (DB).

Mountain Pointe: The repeat as D-I champs didn't transpire, but it still was a solid year for the Pride in 2014.

They finished 10-3 with its losses to Hamilton, Brophy and Chandler. The latter loss denied them a chance at a repeat. There were plenty of graduation losses, but the Pride's history under Norris Vaughan is no down years. Reason for optimism are some key returnees and a transfer QB from Indiana. Four defensive starters make for a good start. Jr. Isaiah Pola-Mao (35 tackles, 7 INTs), a safety, will double as a wide out this year. Sr. LB Vavrix Owens (57 tackles, 4.5 sacks), Sr. DB Ke'Shawn Churchwell (57 tackles, 5 sacks, 1 INT), Sr. LB Daulton Rittenhouse (34 tackles) are the other top defensive returners. Sr. Jack Smith, the son of ASU baseball coach Tracy Smith, has the watchful eye of many D-I schools for his athleticism. He didn't arrive in Arizona until after the regular season ended last year. Smith brings an accurate arm and speed to the position. Despite many skill position losses, Vaughan isn't concerned about covering for those. The work in progress are both lines, which in the past have been rectified rather quickly.

Mountain View: The Toros won just three games last year, the fewest in any varsity season in almost 40 years of varsity competition. Some staff changes accompany coach Chad DeGrenier in his fifth season as 2015 unfolds. DeGrenier is excited about the prospect of a good running game and defense this season. Those haven't been prevalent in his stay thus far. The Toros top returning back is Sr. Cooper Luke (531 rushing yards, 5 TDs). Two very solid receivers, Sr. Mat'ava Ta'ase (699 receiving yards on 50 catches, 4 TDs) and Jr. Curtis Hodges (157 receiving yards, 2 TDs), are standing by for the aerial game. Taking most of the QB snaps last year was Sr. Wyatt Holt, who will concentrate on playing cornerback. He's moved aside for Jr. Wheeler Harris, untested at the varsity level but with potential. The defense must have some newcomers of note that have clicked for DeGrenier with the returning stat leader Sr. Brody Daniels (49 tackles, 1 INT) at defensive back.

Red Mountain: The Mountain Lions managed a postseason berth despite a 3-7 regular season mark. That was made possibly largely by its strength of schedule. The season ended abruptly at 3-8 with a 40-point loss to eventual state champ Chandler in the first round. Coach Ron Wisniewski begins his sixth season as head coach. Top players back for the Mountain Lions reside mostly on offense from a senior-heavy team in 2014. They are Sr. RB-S Desmond Ethridge, Sr. CJosh McCauley, Sr. OL Spencer Lewis, Sr. QB Kyle Buckles and So. QB, Lance Lawson.

Arizona's All-Time Victory Leaders

PLACE	SCHOOL	OVERALL RECORD	FIRST TEAM
No. 1	Mesa	649-332-37	1920
No. 2	Safford	568-294-28	1925
No. 3	Tucson	565-385-29	1910
No. 4	Winslow	563-292-42	1915
No. 5	Snowflake	522-302-23	1929
No. 6	Round Valley	521-290-24	1921
No. 7	St. Mary's	520-289-16	1938
No. 8	Peoria	497-322-25	1928
No. 9	Gilbert	496-364-19	1923
No. 10	Douglas	474-501-25	1906
No. 11	Flagstaff	474-333-36	1923
No. 12	Amphitheatre	466-342-21	1939
No. 13	Tempe	460-389-29	1924
No. 14	Miami	423-439-25	1923

(Source: Barry Sollenberger's Phoenix Metro Football, maxpreps.com)



Returning Leaders, 2014 Stats

PASSING

Gr.	Name/School	Passing yards	Yds/G	TDs	INT
Sr.	Kare Lyles, Saguaro	3,420	244.3	40	5
Sr.	Cameron Haag, AZ Lutheran	3,184	244.9	43	19
Jr.	Ryan Kelley, Basha	3,108	261.8	30	16
Jr.	Nazareth Greer, Marcos de Niza	3,103	258.6	39	9
Jr.	Mason Crossland, Higley	2,928	266.2	34	6

RUSHING

Gr.	Name/School	Yards	Yds/G	TDs
Sr.	Ethan Johnson, Westwood	1,891	189.1	25
Jr.	Tehran Thomas, Desert Edge	1,598	133.2	23
Sr.	Joe Logan, Estrella Foothills	1,591	132.6	19
Jr.	Brandon Hatfield, Poston Butte	1,498	136.2	13
Sr.	Travis Pollay, NW Christian	1,450	111.5	16

RECEIVING

Gr.	Name/School	Yards	Yds/G	TDs
Sr.	Ben McKeighan, Scottsdale Prep	1,543	154.3	16
Sr.	John Okwoli, North Canyon	1,408	140.8	10
Sr.	Byron Murphy, Saguaro	1,348	96.3	13
Sr.	Jacob Brown, Paradise Valley	1,163	96.9	19
Sr.	Spencer Schuller, Bisbee	1,126	112.6	13

TACKLES

Gr.	Name/Pos/School	Total Tackles
Sr.	Jacob Lee, LB, River Valley	201
Sr.	Ruben Figueroa, LB, Sunnyside	177
Jr.	Jaisen Brown, LB, Show Low	153
Sr.	Lane Penrod, LB, Snowflake	142
Sr.	Case Hatch, LB, Perry	141

SACKS

Gr.	Name/Pos/School	Sacks
Sr.	Hamilcar Rashed, LB, Cesar Chavez	20
Sr.	Caleb Ortiz, DL, San Tan Foothills	16
Sr.	Aaron Sanders, LB, Sunnyside	16
Sr.	Brandon Jamison, DE, Chaparral	14.5
Jr.	My-King Johnson, DE, Tempe	13.5

TOTAL POINTS

Gr.	Name/Pos/School	Points	Pts/G	TDs
Sr.	Dionte Flores, RB, Flowing Wells	158	17.6	26
Sr.	Ethan Johnson, RB, Westwood	156	15.6	26
Jr.	Tehran Thomas, RB, Desert Edge	142	11.8	23
Sr.	Joe Logan, RB, Estrella Foothills	138	11.5	23
Sr.	Dominique King, RB, Thunderbird	134	13.4	22

(Source: maxpreps.com)

Murphy, Mom Persevere Despite Missing Loved Ones



(Left) Byron Murphy and his mom Shannon Strickland (photo by Jose Garcia of azpreps365.com) and of Murphy catching a pass against Queen Creek (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com).

By Jose Garcia, azpreps365.com

If she hasn't already, Shannon Strickland is about to send her son, Byron Murphy, a text message.

And another text.

And another.

And another.

"I don't even have to look at the phone," said Murphy, Arizona's next top star in high school football. "I already know it's my mom."

Strickland isn't a helicopter parent, constantly hovering over her child.

She is more interested in protecting Murphy rather than monitoring his every move. He might be the nation's second-ranked defensive back and Saguaro High's next ultra football threat, but Murphy is still very vulnerable.

One of the 17 year old's emotional scars hasn't healed. Strickland also carries her share of scars—more reason to want to protect her son.

The struggles they've experienced didn't break them, however. Strickland and Murphy continue to fight as well as shine just like diamonds.

Their unbreakable bond is partly fortified by every text message Strickland sends and the system of support surrounding Murphy.

"I want to keep BJ (Murphy) motivated every minute of the day to do positive things," Strickland said. "He gets tired of my texting, but it's very important for me that he turns into a good person. I've told myself that there is no way that my kids will have to worry about surviving at the age of 17. They deserve to know what living and dreaming is at this age."

Strickland calls Murphy 'B.J.'

The 'J' is for junior.

Murphy is named after his father, who Murphy has seen only a couple of times since he was five.

The whereabouts of Murphy's dad is for another day, when Mur-

phy is ready to tell that side of the story. Murphy said his confidence level, one way the absence of his dad affected him, was very low as a kid.

"It's pretty hard," said Murphy about not seeing his dad. "But I just have to keep my head right, stay focused and do everything I can for myself and family."

As a freshman, Murphy took all his feelings of inadequacy to the first high school he attended, where an encounter with a coach rattled him but ultimately propelled him to excel.

For one reason or another, tension was bubbling between Murphy and the coach. It boiled over midway through his freshman season in a locker room, where the coach told Murphy that he was never going to be anything and make it to college, Strickland said.

"I was going to prove him wrong," Murphy said. "That I can make it to college. It really motivated me."

Strickland also endured a heavy dose of emotional suffering at a young age.

Her dad left her family when Strickland was seven. A drunk driver killed her brother, Brian.

And at the time of the accident, Strickland's mom, Joan, was battling cancer. Brian and Strickland were attending Coronado High when the accident happened.

Joan passed away not too long after Brian died. Strickland was 17, forced to fend for herself along with her sister, Terry Hooker.

Relatives tried to fill the void. Understandably, it took Strickland some time to rebound even after Murphy's dad left.

But bounce back she did. Besides, she had a lot of fight for—Murphy and his siblings, Beyonce, 13, and Dayna, 27.

Strickland went on to earn a nursing certificate and eventually a business degree. Her will to overcome was rewarded twice over.

"Because of what I went through in life, I feel God is blessing me with good kids," Strickland said. "My daughter is intelligent, a great person with a good heart and doing well academically. BJ is a blessing and so is Dayna. Everything is a blessing for my past."

Murphy must have learned a thing or two about determination from his mom.

After his freshman year, Strickland moved to Tempe, where Murphy made the varsity team and recorded 60 tackles for Marcos de Niza. Strickland came full circle when she decided to move to her hometown, Scottsdale, after Murphy's junior season.

Last year, Murphy helped a loaded Saguaro team win a state title while seeing his stock rise nationally with the help of coach Jason Mohns, Mohns's staff, teammates and Team Murphy. Murphy (6-0, 170) has 20-plus college offers and will announce his top-10 school list midway through this season.

On game day, Team Murphy consists of about 50 friends and family members. One of those members helping guide Murphy is former NBA point guard Mike Bibby, a coach at Shadow Mountain, Bibby's alma mater.

Bibby and Murphy's father are cousins. Murphy played for Bibby's club team and was torn between playing basketball and football until he received his first college football offer (Arizona State) last year. But make no mistake about it the captain of Team Murphy is Strickland.

She was with her son when Murphy was being interviewed for this story and so were his cousins, Justin and Kianna White, Dayna, and close family friend T.J. Barnes.

But despite the strong show of support there's still a void.

"It was hard seeing my mom go through her ups and downs," Murphy said. "But it also motivated me to do what I do. He (father) is not here and that also motivated me to play football and do something he didn't do. I still care for him even though he is not in my life."

Saguaro Ready to Sink Teeth in New Division

By Andy Morales, azpreps365.com

Three division championships and eight state titles.

No matter where they play or who they play the Sabercats have been winners. They have been dominant.

Highly successful head coach John Sanders (62-7) gave way to Jason Mohns in 2012 and the program went on without skipping a beat. Mohns has gone 35-5 with two state championships, and he is also riding a 27-game win streak heading into Division II.

So why are the Sabercats favored this year?

It's very simple. Twenty-four returning lettermen, 13 returning starters and 10 NCAA Division I recruits, including senior receiver Byron Murphy, senior quarterback Kare' Lyles (Wisconsin) and Lyles' brother, Kayden, a junior line-men with a who's who list of potential college suiters.

If games are truly won in the trenches, then Saguaro has a big leg up on the competition. The Sabercats return most of their defensive and offensive line, with senior Michael Weinstein, junior Corey Stephens and senior Jackson Martin joining Kayden.

"We are challenging ourselves early in the season with freedom games against Centennial and Pinnacle, who are both D-I schools," Mohns explained. "We feel we have the talent to make a run at the D-II title, but will need our young players to step in and play at a high level right away."

Saguaro will also benefit from Scottsdale Horizon transfer Julian Carter.

The senior receiver pulled in 693 yards last year. Will Carter have enough to replace Christian Kirk? Heck, can anybody replace an all-around talent like Kirk?

That remains to be seen. Kirk finished with 1,187 yards receiving and was named the Arizona Player of the Year before moving on to play for Texas A&M.

Kirk also rushed for 1,692 yards. But Kare' threw for 3,420 yards with 40 touchdowns and is back to try and improve on those numbers.

Besides throwing to Carter, Lyles will have Murphy to throw to. Murphy finished with 1,348 yards receiving and is the preseason favorite to bring home another POY honor to Saguaro.

The one spot where Mohns might have to rely on younger players is on defense. Of the top seven tacklers from last year for Saguaro, only junior linebacker Brandt Casey (81 tackles) returns.

"(We) should be a team that improves steadily throughout the season as our young players gain experience," Mohns added.

As for rushing, Mohns lists junior Robert Branch-Williams as the next in line to replace Kirk and Kamron Johnson.

That's a tall order, considering Kirk and Johnson combined for almost 3,000 yards last year.



Saguaro talented QB Kare' Lyles (photo by Jim Willittes of maxpreps.com).

But most of the other D-II programs have similar problems, with a whole class of senior leaders from last year no longer available. The division is almost unpredictable with top teams moving to join the powers already there.

Mesa Skyline, Gilbert Williams Field, Avondale Westview, Tucson Salpointe, Queen Creek, Oro Valley Ironwood Ridge, Glendale Deer Valley, Marana Mountain View, and Tucson Sahuaro are all in the hunt to finish in the top 10, but each has lost major pieces to graduation or transfers.

Sabercat State Championships
Class 4A
1995

Class 4A Division I
2006, 2007, 2008, 2010

Division III
2011, 2013, 2014

Division II Preseason Rankings

By Andy Morales, azpreps365.com

No. 1. Saguaro: Are the Sabercats a big school or a small school? Does it really matter? MaxPreps' preseason computer rankings have Saguaro ranked No. 6 nationally for medium schools and for good reason. Now back in D-II, the Sabercats will be instant favorites with at least 10 players earning collegiate interest. Eight state championships. Three of them in the upper divisions. A 27-game win streak. Winners of two consecutive state championships. Enough said.

No. 2. Skyline: Angelo Paffumi revived the Skyline program to a point where the Coyotes turned in an 10-game winning season in D-I last year and lost a close 21-14 playoff game to super power Hamilton. Now in D-II, Paffumi will have plenty of offense in running back Amarii Keyes and defense with Nik Carbo returning. Skyline will travel to Tucson in late September to face Salpointe Catholic.

No. 3. Williams Field: The Black Hawks made it to the 4A-II state championship game in 2010 and have since dominated in D-III, where they have reeled off 43 wins in four years, including a 12-2 mark last year when Williams Field took second place to Saguaro. Steve Campbell will lead his team on a trip to Tucson to play Sunnyside on Sept. 25 for a game that could set the tone for both programs.

No. 4. Westview: The Knights have had a nine winning seasons in a row and are looking to continue that trend with a shift from D-I to D-II. Joe Parker is in his second year at Westview, and he will return quality play from the quarterback and running back positions. Like all teams moving down to D-II, could prove a blessing but the Knights open up with Skyline, Sunnyside and Deer Valley.

No. 5. Salpointe: The loss of all-purpose standout Jamarye Joiner and the transfer of safety Teantae Nash to Chandler bumped the Lancers down to No. 5 but the play of University of Arizona recruit Justin Holt should help coach Dennis Bene continue his incredible 70-4 sectional record. A match at Ironwood Ridge on Sept. 11 could decide Southern Arizona supremacy.

No. 6. Mountain View Marana: Clarence "Bam" McRae is starting his fourth year at Mountain View. Multi-sport athlete Justice Summerset returns for his senior year at the quarterback position. After a year of controversy, look for Mountain View to respond with a playoff appearance, but the Mountain Lions have to get past Sunnyside, Canyon del Oro, Ironwood Ridge, Cienega and Queen Creek.



The Saguaro Sabercats celebrate their 2014 Div. III State Championship (photo by Jim Willittes of maxpreps.com).

No. 7. Desert Mountain: Mike Morrissey will be in his first year with the Wolves after coaching in Iowa and Illinois and former NFL quarterback Kurt Warner will lead the offense. The future looks bright with quarterback Austin Nuessle returning along with receiver Kade Warner and defensive back Keaton Licon.

No. 8. Ironwood Ridge: Matt Johnson took the Nighthawks to a state championship in 2012 and the program has stayed on the scene since. The Nighthawks posted a 9-2 season last year and they will be tested again. Johnson has changed his offensive scheme almost yearly, making this another exciting year.

No. 9. Canyon del Oro: Under Dustin Peace, the Dorados have competed in three divisions (including a 4A-I championship in 2009). The Dorados are now back in D-II after a couple of years in D-III. Look for Noah Soto to lead the team from the quarterback position. We will know pretty early if the magic is back with Tucson High looking to make a statement in week two.

No. 10. Westwood: Spencer Stowers took the Warriors from one win in 2012 to a 9-2 record last year but Stowers has moved over to the newly built Queen Creek Casteel High. Former Chandler coach Jim Ewan has taken over and he will inherit running back Ethan Johnson and linebacker Mitchell Clark. Johnson is one of the top returning running backs in Arizona. Westwood will be chased by Deer Valley, Sahuaro, Sunnyside, Tucson High, Queen Creek and Cienega to name a few. The top 10 could, and will, be completely different by week three.

Football Division II Preview



Salpointe defensive lineman Justin Holt (photo by Chris Hook of maxpreps.com)

By Andy Morales, azpreps365.com

SECTION I

Buena: After three years at Tombstone, head coach Joe Thomas becomes Buena's 12th coach in the last 18 years. According to reports, Thomas had his eye on Buena for several years due to the amount of talent available. Thomas will have to replace the leader at every position due to graduation. Look for stability and players to buy in to his program. Sr. Braxton Bennett (396 yards passing) looks to replace Jordan Haymore at the quarterback position. Sr. Jiovonni Ortega finished with 586 yards receiving last year.

Cienega: Lots of changes for Cienega. The Bobcats lost quarterback Adriell Alvarado to graduation. Alvarado threw for 2,105 yards with 16 touchdowns. Running back Francisco

Dicochea also graduated (1,582 yards and 21 TDs). Receivers Terrence Johnson and Matt Aragon also graduated. The duo combined for almost 1,000 yards. Linebacker Sr. Will Walker returns. Walker had 107 tackles to lead the team. Former Flowing Wells, Canyon del Oro and Pima Community College coach Pat Nugent takes over for Nemer Hassey. Hassey is now the principal at Cienega.

Sahuaro: Cougar head coach Scott McKee led Sahuaro to nine wins last year, the most the school has won in a generation. Now in his sixth season, McKee will have quarterback Sr. Stephen Miller (1,790 yards passing) return but the team will surely miss all-purpose leader Derik Hall. Halls' graduation opens up some holes on defense and on offense. The top three receivers have graduated. Look for Sr. Casey Carnaghi to fill in nicely.

Salpointe Catholic: Hall of Fame coach Dennis Bene has led the Lancers since 2001. Since Bene took over, Salpointe has had an incredible 70-4 sectional record, winning a state championship in 2013 on the strength of a 14-0 record. The Lancers went 8-3 and lost in the first round last year. All-around standout So. Jamarye Joiner (203 yards passing, 214 rushing and 345 receiving) was slated to be the next big recruit to come out of Salpointe but Joiner is sitting out the year. The loss of Joiner causes a major shift in the rankings but Sr. quarterback Roman Arvayo looks to lead the offense and University of Arizona recruit Sr. Justin Holt will hold down the line.

Sunnyside: The Blue Devils clinched a playoff spot in the final week of the regular season and proceeded to knock No. 2 Ironwood Ridge out of the state playoffs in the first round last year. Glenn Posey has led the team since 2011 and he returns 14 starters from last year including Sr. Ruben Figueroa (177 tackles), Sr. Aaron Sanders (110 tackles), Sr. Nick O'Hagin (1,159 yards passing), Sr. DeShay Ramos (105 tackles), Sr. Gabe Soto (68 tackles), Sr. lineman Daniel Rojas, Sr. center Ralph Encinas and Sr. Angel Martinez. Posey calls the group a "solid group of seniors."

Tucson: This is the 50th anniversary of the Badger's state championship in 1965. Justin Argraves is in his fifth season at Tucson after previously leading Mountain View Marana. The Badgers made the state playoffs in 2013 but struggled with a 4-7 record last year. Jr. Jorge Flores threw for 960 yards last year as and Sr. DeAndre Williams rushed for over 500. So. Jeff Lockwood (252 yards rushing) looks to contribute also.

SECTION II

Millennium: Jason Randels has led the Tigers for two years. A Division I playoff contender, Millennium has made the move to Division II this fall. "We will have far more sophomore and junior starters than seniors," Randels wrote "The fourth Diggs

Football Division II Preview

brother, Aidan, will be a starter as a sophomore. The other brothers (AJ, Aaron, Andrew) were all standouts and Aidan will not disappoint." Jr. Charles Walker, Jr. Cameron Taylor, Sr. Nomar Laurel, Jr. JJ Gayles, Jr. Jakob Alicea and Sr. Noah Jones return.

Shadow Ridge: The Stallions reached the Division III quarterfinals only two seasons ago but the loss of running back Chris Salsberry (2,216 yards rushing and 28 touchdowns), along with a total of 20 starters, proved to be a major blow and the team dropped down to a 3-7 record. "The players are trying to build tradition here at Shadow after a down season record wise," wrote second-year coach Ray Karvis. "...we had to start over with a ton of potential talent with very little experience. Many of these players are ready to go now, putting time in the weight room." Sr. Tre Campbell, Jr. Nate Johnson, Sr. Austin Ansbach, Sr. Artie Basaldua, Sr. Amir Luckett, Sr. Ricco Price and Sr. Desmond Evans are key returners.

St. Mary's: Todd Williamson led the Knights to a state playoff appearance last year and finished the campaign with a 7-4 record, but Williamson was let go and was replaced by Marcel Lopez, a St. Mary's alum. St. Mary's will have to replace QB Gabe Losada and his 3,323 yards and 34 touchdowns along with receiving duo Jeremiah Sullivan (1,123 yards) and Josh Arroyo (941). Top defender Jr. Abel Navarrette (105 tackles) returns along with Jr. Jorden Blake (70 tackles).

Tolleson: Jason Wilke is in his fourth year with the Wolverines. A year removed from the playoffs, Wilke looks to compete for the section championship behind 12 returning starters, including Sr. Zane Hemer (1,968 yards passing), Sr. lineman Carlos Garcia, Ruben Mariscal (933 yards rushing), Sr. lineman Marc Mendoza, Jr. Ruben Lebron (214 yards rushing) and Sr. linebacker Brandon Frost. Zemer threw for almost 2,000 yards last season and Mariscal rushed for 1,000 more, making them a potent duo threat.

Valley Vista: Josh Sekoch is entering his fourth year with the Monsoon. Valley Vista qualified for the Division I state playoffs last year but were matched up against No. 1 Hamilton in the first round. Now in Division II, the Monsoon will return Akil Abdullah (1,675 yards passing), Jr. lineman Creston Cooledge, Sr. linebacker Kalief Zahir, Sr. cornerback Jamal Sears, Sr. defender Ethan Parachini, Jr. DB Darrien Sikahemma and Jr. lineman Alex Garcia. Cooledge is considered one of Arizona's top-10 lineman in a loaded junior class.

Westview: The Knights have had a nine winning seasons in a row and are looking to continue that trend with a shift from Division I to Division II. Joe Parker is in his second year at Westview and he will return quality play from the quarterback position (Jr. Ryan Martinez) but needs to find replacements



Ironwood Ridge's Chase Laurita (#66) is one of the outstanding returnees for the Nighthawks (photo by Chris Hook of maxpreps.com).

for a talented linebacker crew. Jr. running back Tyler Vasko and Sr. Stacy Campbell look to carry the rushing load this year and Jr. Daryl Stagger will be the top receiver.

Willow Canyon: Joe Martinez is in his third year of rebuilding the Wildcat program, but he lost quarterback Jonah Hurst, running back Marcus Singleton and receiver Alex Gallaspy. Sr. Grant Carpenter (474 yards receiving) returns as does Sr. Mike Wilson (224 yards rushing). Jr. Jacob Hale (220 yards) is listed to replace Hurst.

SECTION III

Canyon del Oro: Dustin Peace has compiled a 57-16 over his last six years with Canyon del Oro. In that time, the Dorados have competed in three divisions (including a 4A-I championship in 2009). The Dorados are now back in Division II after a couple of years in Division III. Look for Sr. Noah Soto to lead the team from the quarterback position. Soto threw for 2,178 yards and 26 touchdowns last year. Sr. Tristan Peterson rushed for over 700 yards but the Dorados will have to replace their top two receivers. Peterson led the team in tackles (97) but the next 11 leaders have all graduated.

Ironwood Ridge: Entering his seventh year at Ironwood Ridge, Matt Johnson compiled 53 wins including a state

Football Division II Preview

championship in 2012. The Nighthawks posted a 9-2 season last year but the team only returns five starters which is an obvious concern for Johnson. His top returners are Sr. Chase Laurita, Sr. Jared McKemy, Sr. Harrison Beemiller, Sr. Cole McLafferty and Sr. Kristian Becerra. The Nighthawks will need to find a new quarterback and a running back to compliment McLafferty. McLafferty finished with 1,079 yards but the next four rushers combined for over 2,000 yards and they all graduated.

Mountain View Marana: Clarence "Bam" McRae is starting his fourth year at Mountain View. Multi-sport athlete Justice Summerset returns for his senior year at the quarterback position. Summerset threw for 2,742 yards and 21 touchdowns for the Mountain Lions last year. He was also called in for some rushing duties. Jr. Stan Berryhill (787 yards receiving) returns as does Sr. linebacker Jake Darrow (79 tackles). After a year of controversy, look for Mountain View to respond with a playoff appearance.

Poston Butte: It took Paul Moro one year to return the Broncos to the state playoffs and why not? In 30 years, he led Blue Ridge to 13 state championships. His seven wins at Poston Butte gave him exactly 325 wins in his career. "This is my second year at Poston Butte and we are trying to focus on dedication, consistency, and hard work," Moro wrote. "Poston Butte is a school where most of the good athletes have left to go play at other schools. We are in the rebuilding process, trying to keep our kids in our district here. The year before I came the team was 3 and 7 and last year Poston Butte made the playoffs and was 7-4 and ranked 13th. We are hoping to build on that success."

Queen Creek: A Division III power, the Bulldogs are now placed in Division II, making Section III a wild ride to the finish. The Bulldogs rushed for almost 4,000 yards last year with Weston Barlow collecting 2,542 of those yards along with 35 touchdowns but Barlow graduated. Sr. Zane Whiting and Sr. Higley transfer Tyler Bloom will compete for quarterback duties. Sr. safety Kaleb Honea (89 tackles) returns as does Sr. defensive lineman Keaton Pilimai. Questions remain from the running back position.

SECTION IV

Dobson: George De La Torre has had history of rebuilding teams and it looks like Dobson is no different. With a 5-5 record last year, the Mustangs were possibly one win away from making the Division I playoffs. It was the most wins the team has had since 2008. Dobson has shifted to Division II and it just may be the spark the team needs to get over the hump. Twelve starters return, including Sr. quarterback Corey Evans (421 yards passing), Sr. offensive tackle Thomas Pre-

ston III, Sr. receiver/safety Kyle Brost and Sr. center Sean Masters. This will be a senior heavy team.

Higley: Eddy Zubey guided the Knights to back-to-back Division III playoff appearances but Higley has been bumped up to Division II this year. Tyler Bloom's move to Queen Creek means quarterback Mason Crossland will be the main weapon on offense this fall. Crossland is no slouch, as he threw for 2,928 yards and 34 touchdowns last year. Crossland will throw to Sr. Christopher Crescione (587 yards receiving), Sr. Bayley Cook (572) and Jr. Bryce Gilbert (505).

Mesa: The Jackrabbits have not made the state playoffs since 2009. Scott Hare is in his second year at Mesa and will lead Mesa without the use of all-purpose standout Turrell Pietz-Noble. In all, 29 seniors graduated. Kodii Dale returns from his receiver/defensive back position for his final year.

Skyline: Angelo Paffumi revived the Skyline program to a point where the Coyotes turned in an 10-game winning season last year. Now in Division II, Paffumi will go without Jacob Roberts at the quarterback position and running back Dylon Gillette. But one of the state's better backs, Amarii Keyes, is back. He rushed for 1,131 yards last year and returns for his senior season. Paffumi will have to revamp his receiving corps and his top three tacklers are gone but Sr. safety Nik Carbo (83 tackles) returns.

Westwood: Spencer Stowers took the Warriors from one win in 2012 to a 9-2 record last year but Stowers has moved over to the newly built Queen Creek Casteel High. Former Chandler coach Jim Ewan has taken over and he will inherit Sr. running back Ethan Johnson (1,891 yards, 25 touchdowns) and Sr. linebacker Mitchell Clark (89 tackles).

Williams Field: The Black Hawks made it to the 4A-II state championship game in 2010 and have since dominated in Division III where they have reeled off 43 wins in four years, including a 12-2 mark last year when Williams Field took second place. Back in Division II this fall, the Black Hawks look to make the field even stronger. Sr. Quarterback Weston Murphy (1,947 yards passing) returns but the Black Hawks lost Braedyn Bushman (2,758 yards rushing, 33 touchdowns) and Fabian Ortiz (730 yards). Sr. RB Aaron Mason (396 yards rushing) returns but receivers Kenney Owens (754) and Rhett Layton graduated. Steve Campbell is in his 7th year with the Black Hawks.

SECTION V

Campo Verde: Max Ragsdale has been in charge of the Coyotes since day one and he has had success until a minor setback last year when Campo Verde finished 5-6 after a 9-3 campaign the year before. Ragsdale notes returning players

Football Division II Preview

from skill positions as the team strength and those players include Sr. quarterback Cole Pineda (1,047 yards passing), Sr. receivers Eli Jones (257 yards receiving) and Cole Plowman (281) along with Jr. running back Trevor Crowe (201 yards rushing). Jr. linebacker Joey Mask (98 tackles) and Jr. kicker Ryan Romero also return. With only a handful of starters returning on both sides of the ball, the biggest question remains who will play on the line.

Corona del Sol: Cory Nenaber will lead the Aztecs from Division I to Division II this fall. After a 1-9 record last year, the change in divisions may be the shot Corona del Sol needs. Sr. running backs Hunter Olson (271 rushing yards) and Mason Carroll (251) return as does Sr. quarterback Austin Freese (504 yards passing). Jr. Dylan Freese (355 yards receiving) returns as the top receiver from last year. Sr. linebacker Alex Sheppard (63 tackles) also is back.

Gilbert: Derek Zellner is set to take control of the Tigers. This will be his first head coaching position. This will also be the program's first year in Division II. Sr. running backs Cameron Minetta (341 yards rushing) and Mario Meza (279) return. Sr. Dane Stankiewicz (223 yards passing) could take over the quarterback duties with the graduation of Nick Nezami. Sr. Rico Yanez (246 yards receiving) is the top receiver returning and Sr. linebacker Zach Phillips (83 tackles) also returns.

Marcos de Niza: Sean Morin is in his second year as the head coach of the Padres. One play from making it to the Division II semifinals last year, Morin hopes to go deeper especially with Jr. quarterback Nazareth Greer (3,103 yards and 39 touchdowns) returning. Sr. running backs Avery Sanders (483 yards rushing) and Shaun Richards (395) also return as does Sr. receiver Anthony Trujillo (523 yards receiving). Linebacker Jacob Hernandez (132 tackles) also returns.

Mesquite: Jim Jones returns 15 starters to the Wildcat program. He sees experience, team strength and good speed as a few of his squad's strengths. "One of the most focused group of players I've had," Jones wrote. "Team strength is right up there as well." Sr. quarterback Austin Brice (415 yards passing) returns as does Sr. rusher J'rell Williams (295 yards rushing). Sr. Matt Caputo, Sr. Nicholas Young and Sr. Zach Lamatrice also return.

SECTION VI

Apollo: Zack Threadgill has been with the Hawks since 2006. Apollo last made the playoffs in 2012. Sr. Staycee Robinson (779 yards passing) is the returning quarterback and senior Steffon Canady (460 yards rushing) will be the top rusher. Sr. Andrew Katzenberger (245 yards rushing) returns as does Jr. Dre Marin (342 yards receiving). Defense end Tazmen Roe returns for his senior season.

Deer Valley: Eric Bolus has had an incredible start at Deer Valley. The Skyhawks made it to the Division II semifinal round in his first year at the helm and followed that up with another eight-win season only to be upset in the first round last year. But this year may prove more difficult with the loss of 32 seniors but Bolus returns Sr. quarterback Easton Palomino (2,147 yards passing). Palomino has had some attention from Arizona and Missouri according to Bolus. Sr. Thomas Sahotsky (323 yards rushing), Jr. Jordyn Bradshaw and Sr. Braxton Whitehurst also return.

Desert Mountain: Mike Morrissey will be in his first year with the Wolves after coaching in Iowa and Illinois. Former NFL quarterback Kurt Warner will lead the offense. Coming off a 1-9 season, the future looks bright with Jr. quarterback Austin Nuessle (2,429 yards/25 TDs) returning along with Jr. receiver Kade Warner (688 yards receiving). Sr. defensive back Keaton Licon (117 tackles) also returns. The Wolves will need to find a reliable running back to replace Deion Warren.

Mountain Ridge: Bobby Green enters his 10th year with the Mountain Lions. Mountain Ridge has been out of the playoffs since 2010. Quarterback Robert Limmer graduated but both Sr. Jordan Ewart (878 yards passing) and Sr. Kyle Robinson (346 yards passing) return. Running back Hondo Sanchez (255 yards rushing) is a senior as is receiver Aaron Singer (612 receiving). Jr. lineman Gabe King returns.

Saguaro: Now back in Division II, the Sabercats will be instant favorites with 13 starters returning including Horizon transfer Sr. Julian Carter. Ten players have earned collegiate interest.

O'Connor: Head coach John Rodriguez is entering his seventh year with the Eagles. With a 7-5 record, Rodriguez led his best team since his 11-1 2010 squad. O'Connor has shifted to Division II this year where a strong returning senior class will certainly do some damage. Besides Sr. quarterback Bailin Markridge and his 2,327 yards passing and 23 touchdowns, Rodriguez returns 12 starters. His only spot that needs attention is on the line with the graduation of Jamison Pruitt and Shawn Callaway.

Arizona High School Team Records

CONSECUTIVE WINS

5A	40; Mesa Mountain View	1996-98
4A	37; Scottsdale Saguaro	2006-09
3A	63; Lakeside Blue Ridge	1994-98
2A	34; Springerville Round Valley	1979-81
1A	29; Patagonia	1986-89

POINTS (Game)

5A	100; Mesa Westwood vs Yuma Kofa (6)	1969
4A	95; Higley vs. Apache Junction (75)	2014
3A	102; Page vs Monument Valley (0)	1974
2A	113; Scottsdale vs Salt River Indian School (0)	1940
1A	116; Seligman vs Canyon State Academy (108)	2004

POINTS (Season)

5A	650; Chandler Hamilton	2009 (14-0)
4A	703; Phoenix Moon Valley	2004 (14-0)
3A	664; Lakeside Blue Ridge	2001 (13-0)
2A	760; St. Johns	2008 (14-0)
1A	654; Mayer	2006 (12-0)

AVERAGE POINTS PER GAME

5A	62.2; Phoenix Union	1920 (4-2)
4A	51.1; Scottsdale Chaparral	2003 (12-1)
3A	51.1; Lakeside Blue Ridge	2001 (13-0)
2A	54.3; St. Johns	2008 (14-0)
1A	63.8; Scottsdale Prep	2012 (8-1)

CONSECUTIVE GAMES SCORING

5A	221; Mesa Mountain View	1989-current
4A	57; Scottsdale Saguaro	2005-2009
3A	185; Lakeside Blue Ridge	1987-02
2A		
1A	42; Patagonia High School	1985-1990

RUSHING YARDS (Game)

5A	573 Tucson vs Tucson Amphitheater	1971
	573 Phoenix Trevor Browne vs. San Luis	2008
4A	626 Scottsdale Saguaro vs. Phoenix Moon Valley	2009
3A	641 Miami vs Coolidge	1955
2A	635 Miami vs. Ray	2010
1A	649 Tucson ASDB vs. Tucson Palo Verde Christian	1978

RUSHING YARDS (Season)

5A	4,630 Mesa Desert Ridge	2013 (11-2)
4A	4,854 Scottsdale Saguaro	2010 (12-2)
3A	5,337 Lakeside Blue Ridge	1994 (13-0)
2A	4,888 St. Johns	1994 (13-0)
1A	3,816 Pima	1973 (8-1)

Arizona High School Team Records

TOTAL OFFENSE (Game)

5A	746; Phoenix Union vs Miami	1928
4A	829; Apache Junction vs. Higley	2014
3A	773; Blue Ridge vs. Coolidge	1994
2A	714; Baboquivari vs Clifton	1977
1A	1,001; Seligman vs Canyon State Academy	2004

TOTAL OFFENSE (Season)

5A	6,625; Chandler Hamilton	2009 (14-0)
4A	7,347; Scottsdale Saguaro	2010 (12-2)
3A	7,059; Globe	2002 (13-1)
2A	6,309; St. Johns	2008 (14-0)
1A	5,400; Pima	1973 (8-1)

DEFENSIVE RECORDS

SHUTOUTS (Season)

5A	10; Phoenix Union	1927 (9-1-2)
4A	8; Tucson Sabino	1990 (14-0)
3A	8; (many schools tied)	
2A	9; Kearny Ray	1965 (11-0)
	9; Gilbert	1971 (10-1)
1A	6; Patagonia	1988 (12-0)

INTERCEPTIONS (Game)

5A	10; Phoenix Union vs Yuma Union	1948
4A	8; Tolleson vs Phoenix Sunnyslope	1984
3A	8; (many schools tied)	
2A	8; Kearny Ray vs Marana	1969
1A	8; Mayer vs Fredonia	1974

INTERCEPTIONS (Season)

5A	34; Tucson Sunnyside	1980 (12-1)
4A	40; Tucson Sabino	1989 (12-1)
	40; Tucson Sabino	1992 (14-0)
3A	33; Lakeside Blue Ridge	1987 (11-3)
2A	35; St. Johns	2008 (14-0)
1A	26; Mayer	2006 (12-0)

FEWEST POINTS ALLOWED

5A	6; Phoenix Union	1927 (9-1-2)
4A	0; Flagstaff	1934 (5-0-1)
3A	12; Snowflake	1936 (5-1-2)
2A	12; St. Johns	1945 (6-0-1)
1A	86; Patagonia	1987 (11-0)

By Les Willsey, azpreps365.com

For the past five years Desert Edge coach Rich Wellbrock and his staff have fashioned a solid program. In his five seasons at the helm, Desert Edge's average record is 10-2 — the exact record it finished with in 2014.

With Saguaro, Queen Creek and Williams Field out of D-III and now in D-II, the path is much clearer for the Scorpions to strike championship paydirt for the first time.

Wellbrock isn't guaranteeing anything. Not by a long-shot. But he likes his team's chances.

"You know the last three or four years we've been in the (top teams) discussion," Wellbrock said. "That was our goal when I started here was to be in the discussion. Even though Saguaro, Williams Field and Queen Creek moved up people forget some good D-II teams moved down. I think there will be some teams under the radar."

There is much to like about the 2015 Scorpions.

"We have lots of returners," Wellbrock said. "A lot of them are young. A good group of seniors, juniors who played a lot as sophomores. Some that played last year as freshmen."

Desert Edge returns an array of weapons on offense, beginning with an exclamation point in junior quarterback Tehran Thomas.

Thomas loves to run as his 1,598 rushing yards and 23 touchdowns is proof. He also is adept throwing, connecting for 1,388 yards and 15 TDs last year.

If that's not enough, junior running back Roshawn Johnson (1,012 rushing yards, 12 TDs) is eager for a handoff. Senior running back-defensive back Alex Madrano (499 yards, 6 TDs) and senior wide receiver Alias Sturges (268 yards) supply additional alternatives.

Another weapon is versatile senior Kyle Ball, who piled up nearly 500 yards rushing and receiving out of the backfield and often does little things that go unnoticed.

The guys blocking for them are heavy on experience as well with four returning offensive linemen — three-year starter Hunter Jones (center), left tackle Brock Corbin, left guard Tyson Jones and right guard Max Wilhite, a big-time recruit already and only a sophomore.

The defense is a tested unit that surrendered 148 points (12 per game) last year. Eighty of those points were allowed in two games (losses to then D-II Liberty and Queen Creek in the D-III quarters). The leaders are senior outside linebacker Alex Aguirre (77 tackles, 3 sacks), senior end



Desert Edge standout QB Tehran Thomas (photo by Kevin French of maxpreps.com)

Trevor Chaddock (54 tackles, 5 sacks), junior linebacker Vince Delponte (56 tackles, 4 sacks) and sophomore safety Treyvon Williams (52 tackles).

Even with around 45 players on its varsity, Desert Edge has been able to two-platoon often in its tenure under Wellbrock.

"We two-platoon about 95 percent of the guys," Wellbrock said. "The ones who are backups are usually starters on the other side. We use them if needed for depth."

While Desert Edge gets the top preseason billing for D-III, their road to a title won't be easy and it starts right away.

The Scorpions first four games are against Catalina Foothills, Paradise Valley, Chaparral and Peoria. All were playoff teams last season in either D-I, D-II or D-III.

Division III Preseason Rankings

By Les Willsey, azpreps365.com

No. 1 Desert Edge: Not sure the Scorpions have a glaring weakness. If they do the opposition must find it. They are fortified at the skill positions, led by juggernaut quarterback Tehran Thomas, have a massive offensive line and several solid returners on defense. That qualifies them for the top slot, particularly with Saguaro, Williams Field and Queen Creek now in D-II. They'll play a tougher schedule this year out of section facing Catalina Foothills, Paradise Valley, D-I Chaparral and Peoria the first four games so they'll have faced as good as it gets come post-season.

No. 2. Paradise Valley: The Trojans are ready to unleash havoc on opponents with their passing game with standout quarterback Daniel Bridge-Gadd and nearly all his receiving corps returning. Their 10-2 record was achieved competing in D-II last year. Not as experienced overall as the aforementioned teams, but capable if learning comes quickly. The first two games are warmups, but meat of the schedule is five that follow — Desert Edge, Sunnyslope, Peoria, Cactus Shadows and Notre Dame.

No. 3. Cactus: The Cobras aren't far behind Desert Edge and PV in terms of experience and have a long, winning tradition. They have an offense that puts up points and a defense that's capable in a division where plenty of points are scored. It's too bad their early-season schedule is not heartier with the best game of its first five vs. Moon Valley. That may be a detriment come playoff time. Cactus' key section game comes Oct. 9 against rival Peoria.

No. 4. Peoria: It's uncanny how most of the ranked teams in this division are well-endowed at quarterback and that includes the Panthers. With the defense expected to be better in 2015, Peoria should go deeper than one round in postseason. Chalk up a merit point for its non-section slate with Sunnyslope (a D-II team last year), Desert Edge and Paradise Valley among the opening five games.

No. 5. Catalina Foothills: The Falcons are Tucson's top candidate to break through in D-III with more than a playoff win or two this season expected. Last year's campaign ended with a first-round, blowout loss to Queen Creek. They should be the class of their section, although Sabino might have something to say about that. Playing with more consistency is critical. They lost to a D-IV Sahuarita (albeit

a D-IV semifinalist last season) and thrashed a good Maricopa team (D-III) before their playoff loss.

No. 6. Notre Dame Prep: The Saints have a lot going for them after finally landing new coach Mark Nolan as the coaching chair in the offseason was on again-off again. Nolan knows the Arizona landscape after assisting at Brophy for several seasons earlier in the decade. New facilities, true home games and enough returners from a decent season in D-II last year make the Saints a team that can factor in the division. Add solid lower-level programs that graduate players to the varsity and there's plenty of excitement for a Scottsdale school in D-III.

No. 7. Cesar Chavez: The Champions have been battered and bruised the last few years taking on some of the best teams in D-I in non-section play. They've lost most of those. But cascading to D-III is going to lift the program up as it is sure to be in position to win its all-Phoenix Union section. In the last four years, Chavez has lost to only one sister school — Betty Fairfax. Losing standout LB-WR Hamilcar Rashed to Chandler via transfer a week before practice commenced hurt, but in their new section they can withstand the departure.

No. 8. Thunderbird: The Chiefs feature a potent rushing attack with two backs who have 1,000-yard seasons in their careers. They also have more experience than a year ago and that should result in a bump in wins from the 5-5 mark of 2014. Their schedule isn't brutal and there is enough talent that winning their section isn't out of the question.

No. 9. Tempe High: It's likely defense will be the Buffaloes calling card this season with a slew of defenders back — evenly spaced along the front, linebackers and secondary. There is no Emanuel Gant in camp this year so the offense doesn't figure to be as potent. Enough athletes in camp to make offense respectable.

No. 10. Seton Catholic: Like most, if not all the 19 schools statewide that moved up a division, it was time for the Sentinels to climb the ladder. They toyed with most D-IV competition in recent years, won a state title and were in three other final fours the last five years in D-IV. New coach Gary Galante gets the task of leading the transition with the players. Don't expect it to take long for them to jell.

Football Division III Preview

By Les Willsey, azpreps365.com

SECTION I

Apache Junction: The Prospectors posted a 4-6 record last season, with victories over Glendale, South Mountain, Chinle and McClintock, who combined for nine wins. This section can't be any tougher than the past two years for AJ with games in that span against D-III powers Saguaro, Williams Field, Queen Creek and Higley. Still, 2015 will be a challenge. Top returning players for coach Vance Miller, now in his second season, are Sr. WR Tanner Garcia (825 receiving yards, 9 TDs and 151 rushing yards, 3 TDs) and St. LB Alex Valenzuela (34 tackles).

Arcadia: A 7-3 record wasn't enough to garner Arcadia a playoff berth in Division II last year. It missed the playoffs by one spot. Now competing in D-III, the Titans may be able to match or surpass last year's record and play in November. If it happens it likely will be defense that sets the tone. The Titans have the makings of a good defense, particularly vs. the run, according to coach Lenny Abt. The unit has six returnees led by Sr. linebacker Dylan Turelli (67 tackles, 2 INTs) and Sr. linebacker Peyton Skinner (22 tackles). Returning at running back is Sr. Jaylen Isreal (177 yards, 3 TDs). The top returning lineman is Sr. Riley Kaye. Other than Isreal and Kaye, offense will be a work in progress. Arcadia matched up against one team last year that's in its new section (Maricopa) and came away with a 17-point win. All of their section opponents this year are different from the past two years. All three of the Titans losses last year were in section play (Paradise Valley, Chaparral, and Cactus Shadows).

Maricopa: Maricopa is no longer in a D-III section comprised of four Tucson schools and Casa Grande after the most recent realignment. So if you thought familiarity with opponents was out the window, think again. Four of the five teams the Rams face this fall in their new section are teams they played last year (Tempe, Arcadia, Seton and Vista Grande) in non-section action. With some weapons back on offense, second-year coach Chris McDonald is anxious to see what his team can produce. Sr. QB Aaron Owens (2,658 passing yards, 25 TD passes; and 368 rushing yards) was difficult to contain. One of Owens' top receivers is back, Sr. Johnny Johnson (655 yards on 48 receptions, 5 TDs). They are among seven returning starters on offense. Linebackers highlight four returning defensive starters with Sr. Nikolai White (32 tackles, 2 sacks) and Jr. Jackson Stensgard (22 tackles, 1.5 sacks).



North Canyon offensive lineman Austin Jackson (photo by Paul Campbell of maxpreps.com).

McClintock: The Chargers are in a football drought. Their last playoff game was in 2008 and their last winning season was in 2006. New coach Spencer Waggoner has 14 years of coaching experience in several different sports and is a Marcos de Niza graduate. He assisted at McClintock football previously and assisted at Chandler High last season. Waggoner is hoping to change the direction of the program, but it won't be easy given the landscape the past decade. Waggoner inherits a squad that was 3-7 last year with no marquee victories among those. Sr. Zane Hekking is being counted on to lead the offensive line. Sr. JJ Guaderama (297 rushing yards, 3 TDs) and Jr. Deiontay Dozier are returning backs. Waggoner is installing new schemes on offense and defense and hopes players can pick them up quickly. McClintock struggled on offense last year and was unable to throw the ball effectively last season. Defense, which Waggoner believes is a strength, will be need to be active and create turnovers.

Seton Catholic: Lots of change for Seton entering 2015. First, the Sentinels have a new head coach in Gary Galante, who has been head coach at Arizona Boys Ranch, an assistant at Gilbert High and assistant

Football Division III Preview

the last 10 years at Brophy Prep as defensive coordinator. Second, they are moving up to D-III from D-IV. The program has averaged 12 wins a year the past four years. Galante and the program are anxious to get going in their new division home. Seton has four returning starters on offense and three on defense. Top returnees are Sr. wide out Brandon Garcia (618 receiving yards, 13 TDs). Sr. Garret Boyd (221 passing yards, 3 TDs, 231 rushing yards, 3 TDs) gets a fulltime crack at quarterback. Sr. RJ Bailey started every game at center last year. Sr. Luke Zuluage (44 tackles, 2 sacks) and Garcia (57 tackles, 2 INTs) play in the secondary, the strength of the defense early on.

Tempe High: The Buffaloes are on a bit of a roll with 21 wins and two playoff berths the past two seasons. The 21 victories are one less than the previous eight seasons combined. Coach Brian Walker may need to rely more on defense this season as four-year starting and record-breaking quarterback Emanuel Gant has moved on. The defense returns seven starters and the offense returns a few less, but some weapons nonetheless. Leading the defensive returnees, sprinkled among the line, linebacker and secondary is Jr. end My-King Johnson (79 tackles, 13.5 sacks). Sr. tackle Angel Landabazo (63 tackles, 4 sacks) and Sr. end Jordan Davis (79 tackles) are big up front. Linebackers aren't too shabby with Sr. Joey Savage (95 tackles, 3 INTs) and Jr. Roman Cordova (69 tackles). The secondary boasts Jr. Deandre Hughes and Jr. Damian Triana. Triana backed up Gant at quarterback last season. Hughes and Sr. Miguel Mendoza are the top returning rushers. Sr. Bilal Muhammad (644 receiving yards, 10 TDs) and Savage (275 receiving yards, 4 TDs) lead the pass-catching corps.

Vista Grande: A drop to Division III from D-II may help Vista Grande's football fortunes. But then again the Spartans are part of a solid, competitive D-III section that includes Seton, Tempe and Arcadia -- all of whom posted winning records or deep playoff runs in 2014. Coach Tracy Stuart begins his third season with back-to-back 3-7 records to show thus far. Of the 29 returning lettermen eight players have experience as starters on offense and/or defense. Sr. QB Bryant Henderson, Sr. OL-DL DeAndre Walker, Sr. RB Daniel Padilla, and Jr. WR Louis Palacios are among the starters.

SECTION II

Cibola: The Raiders had a five-year playoff run end in a 5-5 campaign last year. Losses to Lake Havasu and Gila Ridge were the key defeats. Cibola can come back

and will likely do so through the air led by Sr. QB Bailey Arvizo (1,972 passing yards, 19 TDs). Cibola has been fortunate in recent years to trot out 1,000-yard rushers. That may not be the case this year so the passing game may have to shoulder the burden. Top receiver is Jr. Miguel Alvarado (496 receiving yards, 5 TDs). The defense returns LB Chad Fanning (64 tackles) and Sr. LB Trey Figueroa (58 tackles). Sr. Zach Mahan and Sr. DT Angel Ulloa were in on 39 and 39 tackles, respectively.

Gila Ridge: The Hawks broke even at 5-5 last year in coach Tyler Kosel's first season. They swept their sister schools, but missed out on the playoffs with a one-point loss to Lake Havasu in the season finale. Kosel brought the spread offense to the program and it was fairly effective. Fifteen lettermen get a second shot at competing for Kosel with the search for a quarterback topping the list. Jr. Cameron Scudder got lots of work this summer in passing league competition. Whoever ends up getting the nod at QB will have a couple veteran receivers, Sr. Randall Dorsey (296 receiving yards on 20 catches) and Sr. Braden Smith (130 yards on 14 catches). Pacing the defense is Sr. LB Gemil Ali (54 tackles) and Sr. safety Luis Ramirez (33 tackles). Sr. DB Drew Robinson and Sr. DT David Montague (3 sacks) also saw plenty of playing time. Jr. lineman Brandon Hultine and Sr. lineman Rocky Ramirez know the offensive system.

Kofa: The Kings goal this season is making the playoffs and coach Ben Franz believes it can happen if a young lineup from last year matures. Seven sophomores often started on any given Friday night plus a half-dozen juniors. The team was 3-7. They'll need to notch at least two wins against their three city rivals to gain a postseason berth for the first time in eight years. The passing game is the strength led by Sr. QB Tanner Peterson (1,378 yards, 7 TDs). Sr. WR Cameron Sharp and Sr. TE Troy Knight combined for 320 receiving yards and 3 TDs as secondary targets. The offensive line needs help with only one primary returnee—Sr. Eli Hernandez. Sr. LB Matt Tydingco (50 tackles, 3 sacks) leads the defense, which has some holes up front and in the secondary.

Yuma High: The Criminals came up empty competing against Cibola, Gila Ridge and Kofa last season on the way to a 3-7 record. They must rectify that to have hopes of making the playoffs. Yuma returns a pair of quality receivers in Jr. Alex Guerra (476 receiving yards, 10 TDs) and Sr. Moases Comet (357 receiving yards, 1

Football Division III Preview

TD). Several veterans on defense return led by Sr. line-backer Octavio Rios (97 tackles, 5 sacks), Sr. DB Armando Mosqueda (52 tackles) and Sr. DB Tristian Dill (27 tackles, 4 INTs).

SECTION III

Barry Goldwater: Goldwater broke even for the first time in seven years last season so there's a bit of momentum. Coach Rich Metcalf says replacing a 32-TD, 2,500-yard QB in Kooper Ray is the No. 1 priority. The Bulldogs have weapons on the perimeter and the coach thinks his team will be solid offensively in his third year at the helm. Sr. SB/FS Alex Centa (584 receiving yards, 7 TDs) and Sr. WR Demarco Jackson (679 receiving yards, 10 TDs) are outside threats. The offensive line returns two good ones in Sr. T Ryan Burkard and Sr. C Brenden Wolf. Sr. LB Sam Michel (128 tackles, 1 INT) leads a defense that will be inexperienced. The Bulldogs must replace seven starters on the unit that were impact players, according to Metcalf.

Cactus Shadows: There's a lot to work with in Falcons camp with 32 returning lettermen — 8 starters on offense and 7 on defense. They get a boost dropping from D-II to D-III, but have two teams on their schedule in their new section that handled them quite easily last year (PV and Notre Dame). Playoff berths have eluded the Falcons for the last four seasons. A replacement is needed at quarterback, but in the meantime Sr. RB Antonio Marchica (949 rushing yards, 15 TDs) is someone who makes the ground game solid, and Sr. RB Peyton Kuehn (324 rushing yards, 1 TD) found his way to yardage at times. Sr. S Michael Maloney (62 tackles, 2 sacks), Sr. DE Logan Kloss (41 tackles, 5 sacks), Sr. LB Greg Ketter (39 tackles), Sr. DB Matt Sill (38 tackles), and Sr. OL-DL Carlo Paoletti (24 tackles) give the defense an experienced look and feel.

North Canyon: With four wins in the last three seasons and none last year (0-10), the Rattlers fortunes can only go up. They were outscored 507-122 in those games. They do possess two of the state's top college prospects in Sr. WR-DB John Okwoli (1,408 receiving yards, 10 TDs, 47 tackles, 2 INTs) and Jr. DL Austin Jackson (56 tackles, 5 sacks). Sr. WR-DB Rhey Williams (171 receiving yards on 17 catches, 57 tackles on defense) helps out on both sides of the ball. A new quarterback will step in this season for graduated Brett Molzhon, who passed for 2,000 yards.

Notre Dame Prep: The Saints have hovered around

.500 (4-6 in 2014) the last four seasons and the hope is they can get beyond that soon. Is this year realistic? Maybe. The move down from D-II to D-III won't hurt. New head coach Mark Nolan left Regis Jesuit (Aurora, Colo.) to take on the Notre Dame challenge. He formerly assisted at Brophy. Nolan hopes to build with lower level excellence and several returnees from last season. Last year's freshman team was 9-0 and the junior varsity tacked on a 6-2 record. The big question is how quickly he and his staff will be able to incorporate its schemes and systems. Sr. WR Jeffrey Kindorf (435 receiving yards, 5 TDs) and Sr. RB Connor Graham (992 yards rushing and receiving, 8 TDs) are weapons for whoever emerges at QB. Sr. Bryce Wolfe is being challenged for the spot by Jr. Cameron Yowell. Jr. DT Austin Shirley (71 tackles, 2.5 sacks) and Jr. LB Kyle Soelle (59 tackles) were pretty decent for sophs last year. Notre Dame unveils a new athletic facility this fall complete with new turf, track, lights, stadium and scoreboard.

Paradise Valley: Greg Davis debuted as head coach last year to the tune of a 10-2 record and D-II quarterfinal berth. There's a mixed bag for how this year could turn out. On the plus side, Sr. QB Daniel Bridge-Gadd (2,740 passing yards, 41 TDs, 587 rushing yards, 5 TDs) returns with four of his top five receivers back led by Sr. Jacob Brown (1,163 receiving yards, 19 TDs) and Sr. James Dragon (382 receiving yards, 2 TDs). Holes that need to be filled are two on the defensive line, three linebackers and four offensive linemen. Top returning lineman is Sr. Devon Teed. Returning backer is Sr. Grayson Fattelal (102 tackles, 5.5 sacks) while Sr. DB Jordan Delaney has experience in the secondary.

Shadow Mountain: This is one tough section for the Matadors to compete in. With three schools in their section dropping down a division (those schools were competitive in D-II), it's no picnic. Shadow Mountain was 3-7 last season beating Dysart, Central and Phoenix Christian. Shadow Mountain returns the best part of its offense with Jr. QB Darion Spottsville (2,043 passing yards, 20 TDs) and Sr. WR Jake Welsheimer (1,055 yards on 65 catches, 14 TDs). Developing a solid offensive line will be a work in progress. Leading the defense are Sr. LB Noah Palmenberg (37 Tackles, 1 blocked punt) and Sr. CB Destin Nasr (30 tackles, 3 INTs and punn return for TD).

SECTION IV

Alhambra: Veteran coach Frank Lutt is in his 21st

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Paradise Valley wide receiver Jacob Brown (photo by Steve Paynter of Paynter's Pics)

season as head mentor and has been pretty successful as Phoenix Union schools have gone of late. The Lions have had a .500 or better season four years in a row. Last year was the best at 7-3. None of those seasons, however, resulted in a playoff berth. Their shot at post-season ended with three successive losses to close the year — two of those to teams made it to postseason. Alhambra returns seven starters on offense and six on defense in their new digs with their Phoenix Union brethren. The ground game is Alhambra's bread and butter and two of their top three backs return — Sr. Jesus Velasquez (657 rushing yards, 6 TDs; 169 receiving yards, 3 TDs) and Sr. Lakel Davis (763 rushing yards, 16 TDs). Linemen are the strength of the defense with Sr. Josue Baston (33 tackles) and Sr. Ivan Flores (63 tackles, 7 sacks, 3 fumble recoveries) at the point of attack.

Betty Fairfax: Competing with its sister schools will be helpful in churning out wins for Fairfax, which finished 4-

6 in D-II last season. Three of those four triumphs were against Camelback, Carl Hayden and Trevor Browne. The transfer of its top player, Marcarius Blount to Mountain Pointe, hurts. The Stampede has a few holdovers from last season with Sr. LB Jerycho Valdez, Sr. SS Gabriel Vasquez, Sr. OT Willie Love, Jr. QB Drew Zembruski and Jr. RB. Jameris Jamerson. Zembruski figures to take over at quarterback and Jamerson will try to fill the void for Blount.

Camelback: Twenty lettermen — seven starters on offense and seven on defense — offer optimism for second-year coach Justin Watson. Watson cites a strong group of seniors who he hopes can lead to improvement over last year's 2-8 record. Camelback's lone wins were against sister schools so their playing field will level off. Sr. LB James Miller (127 tackles, 3.5 sacks) heads the defense. Sr. RB-DB Elijah Newkirk (54 tackles, 2 INTs; 375 rushing yards) was busy on both sides. Sr. WR Anthony Stennis (348 receiving yards, 4 TDs) offers a threat through the air.

Carl Hayden: The best thing about the Falcons' 1-9 2014 season was how it ended — the team's only victory over Copper Canyon. Coach Mickey Van Kirk, an assistant at Tolleson and Verrado before taking the reins for the Falcons, has 15 lettermen at his behest with a few starters on each side of the ball. Offensive line has the most experience, but identifying a quarterback and nearly all the other skill positions will be the focus. Carl Hayden scored just 73 points last season and surrendered 507, but its schedule will be less daunting.

Central: The Bobcats are determined to end a 21-game losing streak that dates back to 2012. Their last victory was over North late in 2012. Coach Jon Clanton is excited about his array of skill players, but building a decent offensive line comes first. Two solid defensive players are among the 18 lettermen. They are Sr. DE Azur Kamara (64 tackles, 5 sacks) and Sr. SS Pete Schneider (86 tackles, 5 forced fumbles and 1 INT).

Cesar Chavez: Cesar Chavez didn't shy away from playing the top teams in its time in Division I. Although the Champions didn't come away with many wins against the big boys (losses to Chandler, Mountain Pointe, Basha and Marcos de Niza), they are more than ready to battle in D-III. They enter 2015 with a four-game winning streak. Top returners for coach Jim Rat-tay, who joined the 300-career-win club last season is Jr. C-OL Taylor Skaff, one of the state's best linemen

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and certain to be a top recruit; Sr. RB-FS Rasheem Blackmon (521 rushing yards, 4 TDs and 60 tackles); Sr. RB-SS Pavone Meyers (587 rushing yards, 4 TDs) and Sr. MLB Nate Guzman (89 tackles).

Maryvale: Expectations are high for the Panthers despite last year's 0-10 record. Coach George Martinez is angling for the school's first winning season in five years. Ten players who started or played on offense return and six on defense. Maryvale is looking for big things from Sr. WR-FS Allante Shines (582 receiving yards, 3 TDs and 24 tackles, 2 INTs). Sr. WR-DB Brandon Harris (116 receiving yards) and linemen Sr. George Campos and Sr. Luis Lopez logged significant time in 2014. The defense has holes to fill up front.

North: Check mark the Mustangs as a team eager to increase their win total from last year of 1-9 that featured a brutal schedule. Coach Bernie Busken begins his second year and has some quality players back. North is led by versatile Sr. Cisco Valenzuela (282 receiving yards and 3 TDs, 250 passing yards and 29 tackles, 2 sacks, 2 INTs). Valenzuela played quarterback, wide out and safety. Playing the most at quarterback last season was Sr. Torey Blevins (802 passing yards, 6 TDs and 180 rushing yards, 2 TDs). Sr. RB Prince Gbeadah (312 rushing yards 3 TDs) could be the leader of the ground attack. The Mustangs feature two solid returning linebackers — Sr. Benito Avila (58 tackles, 3 sacks) and Sr. Jaquan Davis (39 tackles, 3 sacks).

South Mountain: Three wins in a season is the best the Jaguars have mustered the last six years. They competed in arguably the toughest D-III section (top four teams) last year and were overmatched. An ease in competition this year and likely into the future gives hope to coach Daryl Phillips. Like many of their sister schools last year, South averaged less than 10 points a game and allowed 50 or more most weeks. A trio of seniors head the defense — Sr. OLB David Burrell (56 tackles), Sr. James Jones (47 tackles) and Sr. DE Alonzo Mackey (46 tackles). Jr. DB Robert Williams has impressed as a cover corner. Sr. QB Lorenzo Mackey (613 yards, 5 TDs) had a little success. He has a couple skill players back as targets in Sr. WR Garrison Walker (3 TDs) and So. RB Earl Robinson (187 receiving yards).

Trevor Browne: The Bruins have a new coach, the third in the last three years, as they try to improve on a 2-8 campaign with D-III competition. The new coach

is Ryan Prassas, an assistant the last six years at Raymond Kellis. Prassas served as offensive coordinator at Kellis. Prassas inherits 15 letterman, most of them with offensive experience. The most fortified positions are up front on offense. The unit is led by Sr. OT Manny Orona. Prassas expects great things from Orona and Sr. OLB-TE Fernando Lopez and Sr. HB-DE David Valle.

SECTION V

Agua Fria: The Owls need to make some headway in their new section in D-III if it wants to make a run at postseason. Some old foes reside — four in its section — but they were 1-3 in games vs. Buckeye, Desert Edge, Sierra Linda and Verrado. The loss of Tristan Rainey and his 1,500 yards rushing and receiving will be hard to fill. Sr. RB-DB Chris Cofield is first man up in that regard. Cofield rushed for 520 yards, 7 TDs and helped out on defense with 25 tackles. Veteran lineman Sr. OT Amado Beltran is the leader in the trenches. Three receivers are back, but they'll be working with a new quarterback. They are Sr. Jaylon Green (378 receiving yards), Sr. Brennen Peugh (187 yards) and Sr. Alex Alay (150 yards). Top returner on defense is Sr. DB Tavion Allen (67 tackles). The line-backing corps is a weakness heading into the campaign. Sr. PK Griffin Roehler converted 7 of 8 field goals last season, including a best of 43 yards.

Buckeye: The Hawks recent run of winning seasons didn't skip a beat as new coach Kelley Moore returned to the west side after six years at Mesa High. Buckeye finished 8-3 in 2014, dropping a first-round playoff game to eventual D-III runner-up Williams Field. Moore coached several seasons at Independence prior to going to Mesa. Graduation losses were heavy so a more youthful look is on tap. The Hawks saw a trio of senior backs exit, but Sr. RB Andrew Gomez (605 rushing yards, 8 TDs) led the team in rushing last year. Sr. QB Art Bojorquez (1,549 passing yards, 17 TDs) will acquaint himself with new receivers. Top returnees on defense are Sr. OLB Bobby Acevas (73 tackles) and Sr. DT Yancey Vanosdell (32 tackles).

La Joya: The Lobos continued to add victories to their total year-by-year under coach Josh Mitchell. A 7-3 mark was the second straight season they added wins to the previous year's total (1-9 in 2012, 5-5 in 2013). Most of last season's wins were against Phoenix Union schools. Phoenix Union schools are no longer in the section with La Joya, so victories will be tougher to come by this year. Offensively the Lobos have Sr. QB Hector Rodriguez (814 passing yards, 11 TDs) back

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as a starter and Sr. FB-LB Ramses Manriquez (348 rushing yards, 6 TDs). Many spots to fill on defense this year with Sr. DL Dre Aunn Johnson (66 tackles, 4 sacks) and Sr. LB Angel Hutchinson (46 tackles, 4 sacks) the key returners.

Sierra Linda: Last year's 3-7 record was the school's best in its short varsity history — five seasons. Coach Ross Crow is beginning his second season and welcomes 18 lettermen. Experience at the skill positions is solid, led by Sr. RB-LB Adam Gutierrez (608 rushing yards, 12 TDs). Opposing defenses need to keep watch on Sr. WR Toshaun Thomas (614 receiving yards on 34 catches, 5 TDs). Sr. QB Dominic Ruelas (718 passing yards, 6 TDs) will look for more accuracy this fall. The defensive backfield features Sr. DB-S Joshua Chavez, who handles coverage well and an adept tackler in the open field. The area of concern are line play on both sides of the ball.

Verrado: The Vipers were section runners-up to Desert Edge last season on the way to a school-best 9-2 record under coach Derek Wahlstrom. The lone losses were to Desert Edge and Canyon del Oro in the opening round of the playoffs. Verrado must fill the void left Ross Dietz, who graduated and accounted for more than half the Vipers rushing yards and good chunk of receiving yardage (1,200 yards total, 22 TDs). Jr. FB Donte Richardson (348 rushing yards) is the leading returning ground gainer. Sr. WR Xavier James (329 receiving yards, 4 TDs) and So. WR Jatai Jenkins (216 receiving yards, 2 TDs) will likely be called on more this season. Sr. LB Cody Carrier (51 tackles, 2 INTs), Sr. S Emilio Rodriguez (75 tackles), Sr. DB Devin Draper (43 tackles, 5 INTs) and Sr. LB-DL Brev Armstrong (36 tackles, 2.5 sacks) bring clout to the defense.

SECTION VI

Catalina Foothills: It's Year 3 for coach Jeff Scurran as the longtime Southern Arizona coach seeks more progress toward a state title. The Falcons started the process with some young players and several of their best this season will be juniors. Football coaches sons are generally a lift to any program and that can be said of Jr. QB Rhett Rodriguez and Jr. TE Max Michalczyk. This will be Rodriguez's third year as varsity starter. Michalczyk is one of Rodriguez's top targets in his second tour of varsity duty. Other juniors who figure to contribute in a big way are RB-DB Blake Rashad, WR-DB, Jimmy Stewart, LB Brandon Smith and OL-DL Steven Brezowski.

Desert View: The old motto, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again" applies to the Jaguars. The Jags haven't posted a winning season since 2000 and the victory total for a season has fluctuated between 0 and 4 in that span. An 0-10 mark in 2014 saw them score just 47 points. Robert Bonillas is in his third year as head coach.

Marana: The Tigers managed a 3-7 season last year with the stumbling block coming in section play where they were 0-5. They'll face several different opponents this year, but need to navigate the section better. Coach Andy Litten believes more playmakers are in the fold and there is more experience overall. How well the offensive line comes together by late August will be key. Sr. WR Caleb Reeves (343 receiving yards, 4 TDs), Sr. RB Sammy Preder (387 rushing yards, 6 TDs), Jr. QB Connor Leavens (1,116 passing yards, 11 TDs), Jr. RB Octavin Watkins (264 rushing yards, 3 TDs) and Jr. WR BJ McDaniel (196 receiving yards, 2 TDs) are a strong set at the skill spots. Linebacking is in good hands with Jr. Manny Miranda (72 tackles, 3 sacks) and Sr. LB Jon Leon (53 tackles) returning. Also among the seven defensive starters back are Sr. DE Garrett Turnbull (35 tackles, 7 sacks) and Jr. DL Storm Downing (26 tackles, 3 sacks).

Nogales: Last season wasn't the same as 2013 when the Apaches reached the D-II semifinals. Kevin Kuhm's first season as coach produced a 4-6 result. Moving down to D-III this fall may lead to a rebound. Sr. FB-LB Coy Colgate (132 tackles; 405 rushing yards, 5 TDs) and Sr. RB Freddy McCarty (1,077 rushing yards, 10 TDs) are the statistical leaders returning and will start for the third year in a row. Helping Colgate in the front seven after good seasons last year are Sr. DT Jorge Watson (50 tackles, 5.5 sacks) and Sr. LB Michael Valencia (27 tackles, 4.5 sacks). Sr. WR Alan Ortega (253 receiving yards, 3 TDs) and Jr. Ricky Parades, who played receiver, back-up quarterback and safety, will settle in at least one spot.

Rincon: The Rangers have struggled for victories in recent years and it doesn't help when a school is working with a new head coach every year. This year Lucius Miller is on hand for his second season so a little continuity has been established. The Rangers were 2-8 last year and 0-10 the year before in D-II. They get potential relief by moving down to D-III this fall. Only one school it faced last season is on this year's schedule. That's section foe Marana.

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Sabino: The Sabercats dominated their section (5-0) last season and were 7-4, but exited postseason after one game losing to eventual champ Saguaro. The regular-season losses were to D-II Salpointe and Sahuaro and D-III power Desert Edge. Longtime coach Jay Campos has demonstrated a knack for winning. Despite heavy losses to graduation fans should expect another good year, but it won't be easy. A player to watch this fall is Jr. QB Drew Dixon. Dixon played a little of everything as a sophomore, including quarterback, wide out and safety. Other than Dixon there is no returning player with notable offensive stats.

Safford: One of the few teams stepping up a division in this year of realignment is the Bulldogs. They've posted back-to-back 9-3 seasons in D-IV. The new division will take some getting used to as coach Michael Alba begins his fifth season. A lot of players saw substantial playing time a year ago as juniors. Leading returnee is Sr. RB-SS Damian Vizcarra (402 rushing yards, 379 receiving yards, 17 total TDs). The Bulldogs top returning rusher is Robert Perez (682 yards, 8 TDs). Defense has experience back up front, at linebacker and in the secondary. Sr. Jaime Estrada (78 tackles), Sr. DB Chanse Rios (60 tackles), Sr. DE-LB Logan Clonts (32 tackles, 6 sacks) and Sr. DE Harley Delacruz (46 tackles) are good nucleus as the team faces new competition.

SECTION VII

Greenway: The Demons endured some slippage last year, posting a 2-8 mark in the D-III ranks. Coach KJ Anthony begins his sixth season and vows a return to "tough, disciplined" football. Greenway has been right at the .500 mark in Anthony's tenure overall. The Demons strength rests in a trio of returning offensive linemen. All are in the 6-foot-4, 260-pound range on average. They are Jr. OT Ian Fox, Sr. C Joe MacDonald and Sr. OT Jacob Brekken. Sr. RB Romeo Robertson (591 rushing yards, 4 TDs) is the leading returning rusher. Sr. WR Brandon Gerle (206 receiving yards, 1 TD) is expected to be the top pass catcher. Quarterback is a question mark with a couple of players competing for the spot. Defense has five players back with starting experience led by Sr. WR-DB Jared Kenyon (69 tackles, 2 INT) and Sr. LB-RB Brandon Grewe (80 tackles).

Independence: Last season the Patriots were 2-1 out of the gate, but dropped their final seven games to finish 2-8. They also graduated most of their starting players, including their best offensive player — Favon Ireland (more than 1,500 all-purpose yards). Still, the two wins was two more than the 2013 total. Expected

back are receivers Sr. Banki Gadallah (270 yards, 5 TDs) and So. Adrian Talbo (281 receiving yards, 1 TD). Last year's defensive leader is Sr. DB Samuel Martinez (43 tackles, 3 sacks).

Moon Valley: The Rockets have performed better and better for coach Sam Jacobs, now in his fourth season as head coach. Win totals of 2, 4 and last year 10 (10-2 overall) are no doubt pleasing to fans. The double-digit win total is the first in a decade for the school. A good chunk of starters are back — eight on offense and six on defense. The key will be finding someone to replace standout QB Shannon Burton (graduated), who accounted for 3,400 yards of offense and 41 TDs. Sr. RB Cody Buckholz (900 rushing yards, 7 TDs) should be able to fill some of the ground-attack void. Sr. FS-WR Brett Voss (58 tackles, 5 INT and 333 receiving yards, 3 TDs) also played a little QB last season. Sr. SS Nick Carlon (103 tackles), Jr. LB Lanny Glenn (100 tackles, 4.5 sacks), Jr. LB Randy Grivel (84 tackles) and So. DL Mailk Clark (57 tackles, 5.5 sacks) are the feature players of what Jacobs believes will be a stout defense.

Sunnyslope: Could be an interesting year for the Vikings. They ran roughshod over D-II opponents in and out of their section last season. They finished the regular season 10-0, beat Salpointe in the playoffs opening round and then saw their season end with a loss to eventual champ Centennial. Not many starters return - three on each side of the ball. But Slope is dropping to D-III. Coach Damon Pieri has a trio of players he's looking to be leaders in their play. Sr. OL-DL Will Hannah, Sr. RB-DB Jeff Goebel and Sr. DL Aaron Austin. Hannah demonstrates outstanding technique on both sides. Goebel is an explosive back, who rushed for 258 yards and caught 329 yards worth of passes. He scored 10 times in 2014 backing up a pair of 1,000-yard rushers. Austin had 48 tackles and 4.5 sacks. A lack of overall team speed and inexperience at linebacker and the secondary could hurt.

Thunderbird: For the fifth year in a row the Chiefs finished .500 or better. But last year's 5-5 record was the worst of those five and didn't include a playoff berth. TBird appears to have the players in place to rectify the postseason absence this year. Coach Brent Wittenwyler has nine experienced starters on offense and seven on defense. Thunderbird is athletic and fast. It starts in the backfield with Sr. Dominique King and Sr. Kaleb Hofer. King rushed for 1,450 yards and scored 21 TDs last year. Hofer missed last season due to in-

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jury, but piled up 1,000 yards his sophomore campaign. Jr. QB Hunter Paulus (763 passing yards) and Jr. WR Ryan Shaver (404 receiving yards, 2 TDs) give a spark through the air. On defense Sr. DE Marcus Boyd (5 sacks) and Sr. DT Jamar Rowe (31 tackles) are tough up front. Sr. Rees Beasley and Jr. Martin Nivens anchor the linebacking corps. Jr. DB Brook Lightfoot garnered seven interceptions last season.

Washington: The Rams remained in D-III after realignment and will try and rebound from last year's 3-7 record. No team in their new section will be unfamiliar. Thunderbird, Independence and Greenway were in Washington's section last year and Moon Valley and Sunnyslope were freedom games. Washington, however, lost to all five teams in 2014. Top players expected back are Jr. RB-DB Nathan Little (862 rushing yards, 11 TDs; 59 tackles); Sr. LB Ryan Segall (69 tackles); Sr. WR-DB Mario Armendarez (253 receiving yards, 1 TD; 28 tackles); Jr. DB Montre Jones (43 tackles, 3 INT) and Jr. LB Adam Majkrzak (33 tackles, 4 sacks).

SECTION VIII

Bradshaw Mountain: A generous helping of experience greets coach David Moran as the Bears, 7-4 in 2015, try to repeat as section champ and return to the state playoffs. About two-third of last year's starters are back, many of them two-way players. The new alignment places them with four schools they are familiar with and beat last year for the section title so there is much to look forward to. Jr. Gunner Bunderick (938 passing yards, 12 TDs, just 2 INTs) pilots the offense. Sr. receiver David Otero (318 receiving yards, 4 TDs) and (66 tackles) from his safety position. Sr. OT-NG John Trout (43 tackles, 5.5 sacks) leads line play that also includes Sr. center R.J. Aguilar and Sr. guard Dillon Rogers. Sr. safety Angel Gonzalez (84 tackles, 3.5 Sacks) Sr. DB Alex Price (60 tackles, 2 INTs) and Sr. linebacker Brevin Moser (33-tackles) are other top returning defenders.

Coconino: The Panthers managed only one win in its section last year, but they took solace in that since it was against rival Flag High. Coconino looks to improve on its 3-7 mark this fall and have a couple of standout players who could help make that happen. Sr. two-way player Weston Smith (57 tackles, 9 sacks) lines up at defensive end. Smith also rushed for 255 yards last year. Manning the other DE spot is Sr. Erik Arvizo (54 tackles, 2 sacks). The Panthers top returning skill player in terms of production is Sr. receiver Jacob Hughes (290 receiving yards, 3 TDs).

Flagstaff: The Eagles are trying to make strides and a .500 season would be a nice step up. They finished 2-8 last season and the school hasn't reached postseason since 2007. Former Sinagua coach Dave Dirksen takes over head coaching duties for Robbie Rusconi, who resigned after one season (2014). The Eagles face some familiar opponents (Mingus, Prescott, Bradshaw Mountain and Coconino) in their slightly new section. They lost to all four last year and their only victories were against winless teams (Central and Kingman).

Mingus: The mission for the Marauders is simple -- get back to postseason. The team posted a 5-5 mark to fall short last yer, but has the pieces to redeem itself. Sr. QB Jordan Upham (573 rushing yards, 707 passing yards, 23 total TDs) gets another year behind center. Sr. RB Tristan Clark (427 rushing yards, 4 TDs) and Jr. TE Trevor Galloway (207 receiving yards, 4 TDs) lead a deep team at the skill spots. Sr. LB Pete Kelly (73 tackles, 9 sacks) and Galloway (57 tackles, 5 sacks) are stalwarts of the defense. A lack of depth in the line play on both sides could be a problem if injuries pile up. Top O-Linemen are Jr. Jordan Vincent, Sr. Stefano Dalu and Sr. Nathan Jones.

Prescott: Defense returns the most experience as the Badgers have six starters back among 20 lettermen from a 7-3 squad that missed the playoffs. Sr. linebacker Luke Roberts (61 tackles, 10.5 for loss, 8 sacks) seeks an even better year and is joined up front by Jr. end/linebacker Derek Knotek (26 tackles). Top returning ball carrier is Jr. Christian Setter (233 yards, 4 TDs). Jr. Quinten Cooley was an all-section choice last year and joins Jr. Alec Montague as the team's top linemen. Prescott must replace its quarterback and top running back, but depth at the skill positions is one of the strengths cited by coach Cody Collett.

SECTION IX

Cactus: There's plenty of evidence that this will be another solid year for the Cobras, who have reached postseason the past 14 seasons. Coach Larry Fetkenhiertallied his 300th career wins last year and should climb past a couple more legendary mentors this fall. Fetkenhier likes the experience returning at key positions. Sr. QB Preston Guerra (2,339 passing yards, 27 TDs, 711 rushing yards) is outstanding. Sr. RB Chad Jennings (728 rushing yards, 15 TDs) plus a handful of other returnees who combined for 600 rushing yards to make the offense tough to defend. Sr. WR Xavier Villarreal and Jr. Matt Eberhardt combined nearly equally for 1,176 receiving yards. The linebacking corps is re-

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lentiful led by Sr. Bryan Ramierez (109 tackles, 5 sacks, 2 INTs), Sr. Matt Ledesma (109 tackles) and Jr. FS Trent Davis (90 tackles). Fetkenhier's concern at the outset is youth on the offensive and defensive lines.

Copper Canyon: It's been a tough haul for the nearly decade-old school with no playoff appearances and one .500 season to its credit. Coach Shawn Kemmer's first year result was 1-9. On the plus side for 2015, 30 lettermen return. The offense has most of its starters back, but the Aztecs managed just 76 points last season. Top players are Sr. WR-SB J.J. Lyons, who transferred from Phoenix Christian, Sr. CB Keith Brown, an Adams State commitment, and Sr. CB Damion Ward, (55 tackles, 2 INTs). The forte will be the passing game.

Ironwood: A 3-7 season in 2014 could have been much better for a school that battled in D-II. The Eagles were involved in a half-dozen competitive games. Five were decided by nine points or less and they lost four. The program lost a 1,000-yard rusher to graduation in Jett Robertson. And two of its top three receivers graduated. There are quality returnees. Ironwood features two-way standout Sr. RB-LB Austin Chatwood (126 tackles, 3.5 sacks and 3 forced fumbles). Chatwood played a little offense and might do more this season. Sr. QB Andrew Espinoza (2,196 passing yards, 18 TDs) doesn't have many experienced receivers to throw to this year. One that is back is Sr. WR-DB Kevin Luna (453 receiving yards, 2 TDs). The defensive spotlight is on Chatwood, but shed some light on Sr. LB-SS Noah Keene (117 tackles, 2 INTs) as well.

Peoria: After falling short of postseason play in his first season guiding the Panthers, Will Babb has the program in win-mode. Last year's 9-2 mark followed an 11-1 campaign. Peoria lost in the first round of 2014 to Moon Valley on a late TD. This year figures to follow the pattern of the previous two with lots of experience and ample depth. More than half the offensive starters return led by Sr. QB Anthony Guevara (2,030 passing yards, 20 TDs and 369 rushing yards, 5 TDs). Guevara has started for two seasons. Two capable receivers look to double up on solid seasons and offer outstanding return skills — Sr. WR Noah Erickson (40 receiving yards, 8 TDs, 1 KR TD) and Sr. WR Kahliq Muhammad (597 receiving yards, 8 TDs, 4 KR TDs). A trio of OLine starters are intact — Sr. C Zack Watt, Sr. T Zair Soto and Jr. T Caleb Torres. The defense has eight players who saw lots of action. Marquee names are OLB Gilbert Lopez (99 tackles 10 sacks, 14 for loss) and Sr. DE-OLB Josh Hervol (64 tackles, 2 FBR).

Raymond Kellis: Placement in Division III has to be a good thing for the Cougars. They were winless last season (0-10) and have 10 wins total the past four years. Shawn Copeland hopes an offense with eight returning starters can help generate some wins in 2015. Sr. RB Anthony Ramirez (649 rushing yards) and Sr. WR Hector Lugo (266 receiving yards, 2 TDs) are the top returning skill players. Three quarterbacks saw action last year and all are back. Each threw more picks than TDs. Sr. NG Michael Gonzalez was the mainstay up front (28 tackles, 1 INT) and Sr. CB Tanner Bradley (30 tackles) was the leader in the secondary.

Sunrise Mountain: The Mustangs equaled their best win total under current coach James Carter with nine wins last year. This will be Carter's sixth season at the helm and he's won twice as many as he's lost in that span. They are accustomed to D-III competition so they figure to be competitive in the section. The team is thin on returnees, particularly on defense. The Mustangs can score with the leadership at quarterback, but how well they can defend is the critical factor this fall. Jr. QB Chase Cord (2,286 passing yards, 33 TDs, 933 rushing yards) is mobile and highly efficient. Though Cord lost a couple targets to graduation he has Sr. WR Nate Flores (476 yards receiving) and Sr. WR Kenton Riley to pick up some of the slack. Two starters back on defense are Sr. LB Kelby Merrifield (45 tackles) and Sr. DB Danny Nunez (43 tackles, 3 INTs). Replacing the defensive front and linebackers will be a focus. Seventeen of the 23 sacks and 11 of the 14 picks Sunrise Mountain recorded last year came from seniors.

Brophy DE Murphy Not Stifled By Late Start



Brophy standout Connor Murphy (center) figures to have a big senior year (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com).

By Les Willsey, azpreps365.com

Better late than never.

In the case of Brophy defensive end Connor Murphy, those words couldn't be more apropos. Murphy is easy to locate with or without a helmet on.

With helmet attached he's a head taller than anyone on Brophy's squad. Without it you see a strapping, ginger-haired lad with mayhem on his mind.

Murphy, a 6-foot-7, 255-pound senior, has evolved to become one of the state's top recruits. That's with only one full season of football behind him. Football, in fact, didn't seem to be on his radar at all. There have been impediments to his embracing of football. He is locked in now.

"My very first game was against Desert Mountain (2013)," Murphy said. "They were said to be all that. They had a quarterback (Kyle Allen) and receiver (Mark Andrews) who were really great. I remember stepping on the field, and I got that feeling. A real adrenaline rush. I knew I belonged out there hitting people."

Brophy nearly shutout Desert Mountain that night, winning 13-6. Only an Allen rushing touchdown with seconds left prevented a shutout of a prolific offense. That game was the highlight of Murphy's first season.

It was limited, however, to four games due to a fractured elbow. There were other roadblocks prior to that injury.

But the sensation brought on by huge crowds and the excitement of football had Murphy hooked. It wasn't always that way.

Growing up he was always taller than most of his peers. It prevented him from playing Pop Warner very much with others his age since his size (not height but weight that went with his lengthy frame) forced him to play up with bigger kids or not at all.

And as many tall kids will do, he figured basketball was

his game. He played it more than any other sport. Played club ball all the way through eighth grade.

"That's what I wanted to do for the longest time," Murphy said. "Basketball. At times I miss it, but I also know now I'm doing what I was meant to do."

Murphy planned on giving football a chance as a freshman, but as his eighth grade year ended he broke the tip of his femur. Prior to that he mostly participated in flag football. As a result of the break, he never played a down his freshman year. Basketball was still looking good.

Somehow football was not tossed aside and forgotten. Maybe it was the fact older brother Trent, a Brophy standout who went on to a stellar career at Stanford and now plays in the NFL with the Washington Redskins, kept Connor interested. Maybe it was just meant to be.

Regardless, Brophy coach Scooter Molander and the Broncos are the beneficiaries.

"Connor is a very serious guy," Molander said. "He's a very loving young man off the field. He plays with great passion, toughness and physicality. That's what we want."

Murphy dodged the injury bug last year and played his first full varsity season. Molander and the opposition got their first real taste of Murphy's ability.

"The middle of last season he really came on," Molander said. "We had a streak of nine wins in a row. Games with Red Mountain and Mountain View he took off, and showed he was a force. This guy is going to be really something. He has the frame and the pedigree."

This summer has been a fun and active one for Murphy. He's worked out with Trent and partook of some jiu-jitsu training offered by the Gracie Brothers. That branch of martial arts has been a huge benefit, according to Murphy.

"It teaches you patience so you know when to strike," Murphy said. "I know it's going to help me for football."

And last month he qualified for The Opening, an elite Nike camp in Beaverton, Ore., after earning Nike Opening regional Defensive lineman MVP honors. Even with that and hanging around Trent some this summer, Connor Murphy doesn't cling to Trent in all things. He'll offer him a tip from time to time, but Connor says Trent leans toward letting him "figure out things on his own".

With practice officially started for Brophy on July 27, Murphy has his focus on the upcoming season. He's received 15 offers give or take, but will take his time with unofficial visits and likely take his allotted five visits later in the year. He wants his final year in an all-too-truncated prep career to be one for the books.

"There are five or six guys pulled up to varsity when I was a sophomore," Murphy said. "We're seniors now. There are 41 seniors on this year's team. We have a lot of good leadership. We want to go out with a big year."



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NW Christian Top Pick in Division IV

By Andy Morales, azpreps365.com

Selecting the top team in Division IV has been a very difficult task due to the amount of talent that graduated last year. Top quarterbacks, running backs and receivers have left almost every team in the division.

The top ten will be fluid and teams not even considered now will most likely enter into the conversation as quickly as week three or four.

River Valley, Snowflake, Lake Havasu, Estrella Foothills and Northwest Christian have all taken turns in various drafts for this publication. In terms of the amount of returning talent, NW Christian comes out on top.

Head coach David Inness is starting his sixth year and the Crusaders have won at least nine games a year since 2008. There should be no reason why the squad can't match that total with 16 starters returning.

Top returning players include, junior Bubba Ponce along with seniors Ben McGriff, Parker Valerious, Travis Pollay, Drew Inness, Ray Kindred, Tanner VanHofwegen, Nathan Beyeler and Logan Byers.

McGriff is an All-State lineman with 53 starts in a row, Pollay has rushed for over 2,000 yards and Innes threw for over 2,700 yards with 27 touchdowns last year. The Crusaders are as stacked as they come.

"(We have) experience on the line," Inness said. "Experience coming back with our running back and three-year starter at quarterback and secondary will be a strength on defense."

Inness points to youth among his linebackers as his biggest question mark but all teams have question marks at this point.

"We hope to be around at the end and see if we can make a run at it, Inness added. "You have to be as lucky as you are good once the playoffs start."

Paul Duchaineau and Mark Ruckle led River Valley to their first state championship last year, and the co-head coaches helped guide River Valley to a 13-1 finish. The wins come a year after Terry Staggs led the Dust Devils to a runner-up finish in Division IV.

The combined 25-3 record over the last two years is one of the most impressive in D-IV history. It is almost up there with the Lakeside Blue Ridge teams under Paul Moro. Almost.

In order for the coaching duo of Duchaineau and Ruckle to be mentioned with Moro they must win multiple titles and there is no time better than right now while they are hot.

Duchaineau controls the offense and Ruckle the defense. The one glitch is that only one offensive starter returns.

"We have a whole new offense to install as all of players on offense for the most part graduated," Duchaineau said.

"We will not be in a rebuilding mode more of a restocking mode. It was the first year for the co-head coaches and it seemed to work pretty well. We are a good two-headed monster as we both over see different parts of the duties."

The duo lists senior linebacker Jacob Lee, senior running back/defensive back Andres Galvez, senior safety Brent Vegas and senior tackle Teddy Claredon as their top returning players. Lee has tallied an incredible amount of tackles (331, 12.2 per game) in the past two seasons.



Northwest Christian offensive lineman Ben McGriff (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com)

Snowflake will also make some noise but head coach Ron Tenney resigned to become superintendent for the Heber-Overgaard School District after taking the Lobos to the state championship game last year.

Even without a title, it was one of the most successful years in Snowflake history. Quarterback Tyler Claridge returns for his senior year. He threw for 1,883 yards and 20 touchdowns but his top three targets have all graduated. Running backs Trevor McCray (1,543/16) and Drew Schneider (1,369/23) have also graduated.

Contenders such as Sahuarita are in the same boat. The team left standing at the end will be the one that prepared the best in the offseason.

"Mark is a very good weightlifting coach both in season and out of season.," Duchaineau added. "That is a major component of our success. The players have bought into our system and we just need to coach them up to be successful."

Other teams looking to make statement are Goodyear Estrella Foothills, Coolidge, Lake Havasu, Show Low, Yuma Catholic, Tucson Pueblo and Tucson Flowing Wells. But as mentioned before, the D-IV picture should be much clearer by Week four.

Division IV Preseason Rankings

By Andy Morales, azpreps365.com

No. 1. Northwest Christian: The Crusaders have won at least nine games a year under David Inness and there should be no reason why the squad can't match that total with 16 starters returning. Having their first two games at home, along with three of the first four, could help set a winning tone for the year for the Crusaders.

No. 2. Snowflake: Ron Tenney resigned after taking the Lobos to the state championship game last year. Even without a title, it was one of the most successful years in school history and new coach Kay Solomon will have quarterback Tyler Claridge returning for his senior year. Opening up at Tucson Amphitheater will let us know if Snowflake is back.

No. 3. River Valley: Co-head coaches Paul Duchaineau and Mark Ruckle led the Dust Devils to their first state championship last year with a 13-1 record. With only one starter returning from the offensive side, it's difficult to know what to expect.

No. 4. Sahuarita: Rodney Day was an assistant at Sahuarita for 15 years, but he takes over with the move of successful coach David Rodriguez to Oceanside, California. The Mustangs went 12-1 last year. There is a lot of talent returning, but a new quarterback will make this team a mystery.

No. 5. Estrella Foothills: Lamar Early has turned the Wolves into one of the more successful programs in D-IV. He turned a 2-8 program into a playoff contender in one year and has made the playoffs every year since 2012. An extra week before Game 1 should help Early prepare for a difficult season.

No. 6. Coolidge: Cayle Ferguson has posted three 10-win seasons since he took over the Coolidge program in 2009. More recently, the Bears went 10-2 in 2013 and 2014. Charles McCarty, Tyler Stewart and Trenton Davis all return. McCarty will be called upon to shoulder the load again.

No. 7. Yuma Catholic: Yuma Catholic coach Rhett Stallworth should reach 100 wins sometime near the end of the regular season. Since 2010, Stallworth has guided the Shamrocks to four D-V championship appearances and three championships including the last two in a row but only four starters return on offense and four on defense.

No. 8. Flowing Wells: Mark Brunenkant is in his seventh year with the Caballeros. He took the team to a 7-0 record to start last year but did not qualify for the playoffs. Senior running back Dionte Flores looks to change all that. As long as Flores remains on the field, Flowing Wells should break through.

No. 9. Pueblo: Former Arizona and NFL standout Brandon Sanders has turned the Warriors around. There hasn't been much excitement at Pueblo since 1961 but Sanders posted a 7-3 record last fall in his first year. Quarterback Justin Pledger returns for his senior year as does running back Jorge Romero and receiver Frankie Gomez.

No. 10. Lake Havasu: Karl Thompson led the Knights to a playoff spot in D-II last year and the program will compete in D-IV this year to save on travel costs. A difficult task to predict how the Knights will respond with Amphitheater, Pusch Ridge, Walden Grove and Blue Ridge leading a group of hungry teams fighting to get in.

Football Division IV Preview

By Andy Morales, azpreps365.com

SECTION I

Blue Ridge: The Yellow Jackets are known for collecting state championships (15) and undefeated seasons (12) but graduation hit Blue Ridge hard last year and the program found it difficult to replace legendary coach Paul Moro. Moro led the school for 30 years, including a 12-2 mark and a state championship in 2013. Reports have 16-year line coach Bob London taking over this fall with Moro's blessing. London will inherit 10 starters from the disappointing 5-6 record from last fall. Sr. Blain Hebuck, Sr. Ryan Echales, Sr. Tristen Johnson, Sr. Dominic West and Jr. Coy London are the key returners with Hebuck and Echales earning notices from the college ranks.

Page: Jeff Wheatley has guided the Sand Devils to back-to-back playoff appearances and returns for his fourth year with the program. He will have to go without quarterback Andrew Runyan and running back Jason Moore (1,002 yards rushing). In fact, the Sand Devils graduated their top six running backs and top receiver (Aram Redking). Receiver Kirk Benally returns for his senior year. Wheatley has a lot of holes to fill on the defensive side also with his top four tacklers all graduated.

Payson: Jake Swartwood (15-17) enters his fourth year at Payson. The Longhorns return 15 starters including Sr. quarterback/rusher Chaz Davis (2,737 combined yards), running back Sr. Wyatt Chapman (1,142 yards rushing) and other key players, Sr. Ruben Estrada, Jr. Korben White, Jr. Trey Glasscock, Sr. Taran Sarnowski and Sr. Tito Vega. According to Swartwood, Davis, Chapman and Estrada are being recruited. "Our team has great overall speed and strength," Swartwood wrote. "They swarm to the ball defensively and execute well." One huge loss is safety Bowen Sweeney.

Show Low: Randy Ricedorff has won two state championships with the Cougars but last year was disappointing with only five wins. The Cougars went five years with at least 10 wins prior to last fall. Fourteen starters return, including Sr. Willie Wyatt, Jr. Rhett Ricedorff, Jr. Dallin Tenney, Jr. Jamie Webb, Jr. Jaisen Brown, Sr. Quentin Clark, Sr. Mason Fagotti and Sr. Jace Brewer.

Snowflake: Ron Tenney resigned to become superintendent for the Heber-Overgaard School District after taking the Lobos to the state championship game last year. Even without a title, it was one of the most successful years in school history. Quarterback Tyler Claridge returns for his senior year. He threw for 1,883 yards and 20 touchdowns but his top three targets have all graduated. Lane Penrod

returns for his senior year as a receiver. Likewise running backs Trevor McCray (1,543/16) and Drew Schneider (1,369/23) have graduated. Jr. Zach Solomon returns.

Winslow: Brandon Guzman will be in his first year with the Bulldogs. An assistant coach at Winslow for the past three years, Guzman was an All-State lineman with the Bulldogs as a player before he moved on to play in college. He inherits 17 starters, including Sr. Akkeem Foster, Jr. Darrien Brown, Sr. Sheldon Smith, Jr. Sonny Begody and Sr. Rey Velez. "With the new AIA alignment I am excited to compete against the teams from the old "3A East" again," Guzman wrote. "We will have a strong senior class and I expect to compete with the very best in the new Division IV this fall. We will play tough disciplined football every Friday night, and do our very best to represent the community of Winslow!"

SECTION II

Catalina: Former All-State Cienega lineman Zach Davila has already turned some heads this summer with the Trojans. Regarded as one of the top linemen in his class, Davila was recruited by Utah but moved over to Arizona. It's been over 10 years since the program has won seven games. Top players returning are Sr. Gerardo Romero and Sr. Andy Trinh. "We have strong leadership at the top with our seniors," Davila wrote. "Not too many seniors on the team but the seniors we have work hard on and off the field. They are providing great leadership to our younger guys in the program."

Douglas: The Bulldogs have not had a winning record since 2011 but second-year coach Riki Valdez (2-8) hopes to return Douglas to the success the school experienced at the start of the decade. Douglas returns nine starters with Valdez listing Sr. linemen Andy Diaz, Sr. Junior Nevarez and Jr. Jude Romero as the key returners from his first year at the school. In fact, four of five starting offensive linemen return from last season. The biggest question remains the skilled positions with the quarterback, top two rushers and the top receiver graduated.

Empire: W.T. Jeffries is in his third year with the Ravens. Sr. quarterback Lorenzo Sanchez returns (556 yards passing). Sr. running back Chris Schoolcraft rushed for 834 yards and eight touchdowns. Top receiver Sr. Ethan Eageron (309 yards) also returns. Empire has not made the playoffs since 2012. "We have a lot of work to do and this spring we have gotten a lot done putting in our running game and trying to answer the questions we have at LB and at DT," Jeffries said. "We have come together nicely this spring as a team and I hope that continues throughout the summer and the start of fall practice."

Football Division IV Preview

Palo Verde: Laurence Ruhf is in his second year with the Titans. With two state titles, 2005 being the last, there is promise at the neighborhood school but five wins (2013) is the most the Titans produced since 2009. Seniors D'Andre Davis, Andy Heidrick, Zayvion Wilmore, Isaac Olguin, Brandon Clark, Jacob Macintosh, Cody Stewart, Anthony Jaimes and Devin Glover return along with Jr. Clifford Brown. "We are a young program," said Ruhf. "We have some young talent that could be difference makers for next season."

Pueblo: Brandon Sanders has turned the Warriors around. There hasn't been much excitement at Pueblo since 1961 and for good reason. Posting a 7-3 record last fall in his first year, the former University of Arizona and NFL standout is on the verge of making the playoffs this fall. Quarterback Justin Pledger returns for his senior year as does running back Jorge Romero (1,207 yards rushing) and receiver Frankie Gomez (601 yards receiving). Pledger also led the team in tackles.

Santa Rita: The Eagles have won a total of 11 games since 2009. Working with their fifth coach in as many years, the Eagles will return senior running backs Ontareo Jones and Lyle Bryant. Senior receivers Samuel Fonseca and Aaron Wilkerson also return.

Thatcher: Sean Hinton returns home to lead the Eagles. In his first year, the former Arizona State safety will help guide Thatcher from Division V to Division IV. Replacing Heath Motes will be very difficult. Motes threw for 1,575 yards and rushed for 2,089 more. Sr. Payton Turley returns as the top offensive weapon and Sr. Joshua Palmer as the top defender. Jake Dunlap will be the junior quarterback.

SECTION III

Kingman: Greg Tonjes stepped in to coach the Bulldogs only weeks before the season was to start last year. Winning at Kingman has been a struggle and the losses piled up as the Bulldogs finished 0-11. Still, there is realistic optimism: "Best coaching staff I've ever put together," Tonjes wrote. "Three guys that have played big time college football and been on NFL Practice Squads. The most unique storyline is can a young team change a losing tradition that has been around for almost 20 years? And then the other big deal is can a young football team mature enough to be ready to compete for a section championship? Lastly, for the first time in Kingman High School football, the other two Kingman teams, Lee Williams and Kingman Academy, will be playing us. Big rivalries begin. Exciting year for Kingman!"

Kingman Academy: D.B. Stroup led the Tigers to the

state playoffs in his first year on the job. The move to Division IV will be a test for sure. Still, Stroup points to experience as a team strength with 13 starters returning, mostly in key roles. Sr. Walker Glass, Jr. Jordan McDowell Seybert, Sr. Tristen Pitts, Jr. Dillon Zorn and So. Nate Carter all return. Pitts is rumored to be able to kick consistently from 50 yards out.

Lake Havasu: Karl Thompson led the Knights to a playoff spot in Division II last year and the program will compete in Division IV this year to save on travel costs. Quarterback Sam Warner graduated as did standout running back Austin Stefick (2,033 yards). Look for Sr. Jacob Kalogonis to carry the ball more. Sr. receiver Kylan Konen also returns. Sr. linebacker Tyce Shoemake returns as does Sr. Cole Meals.

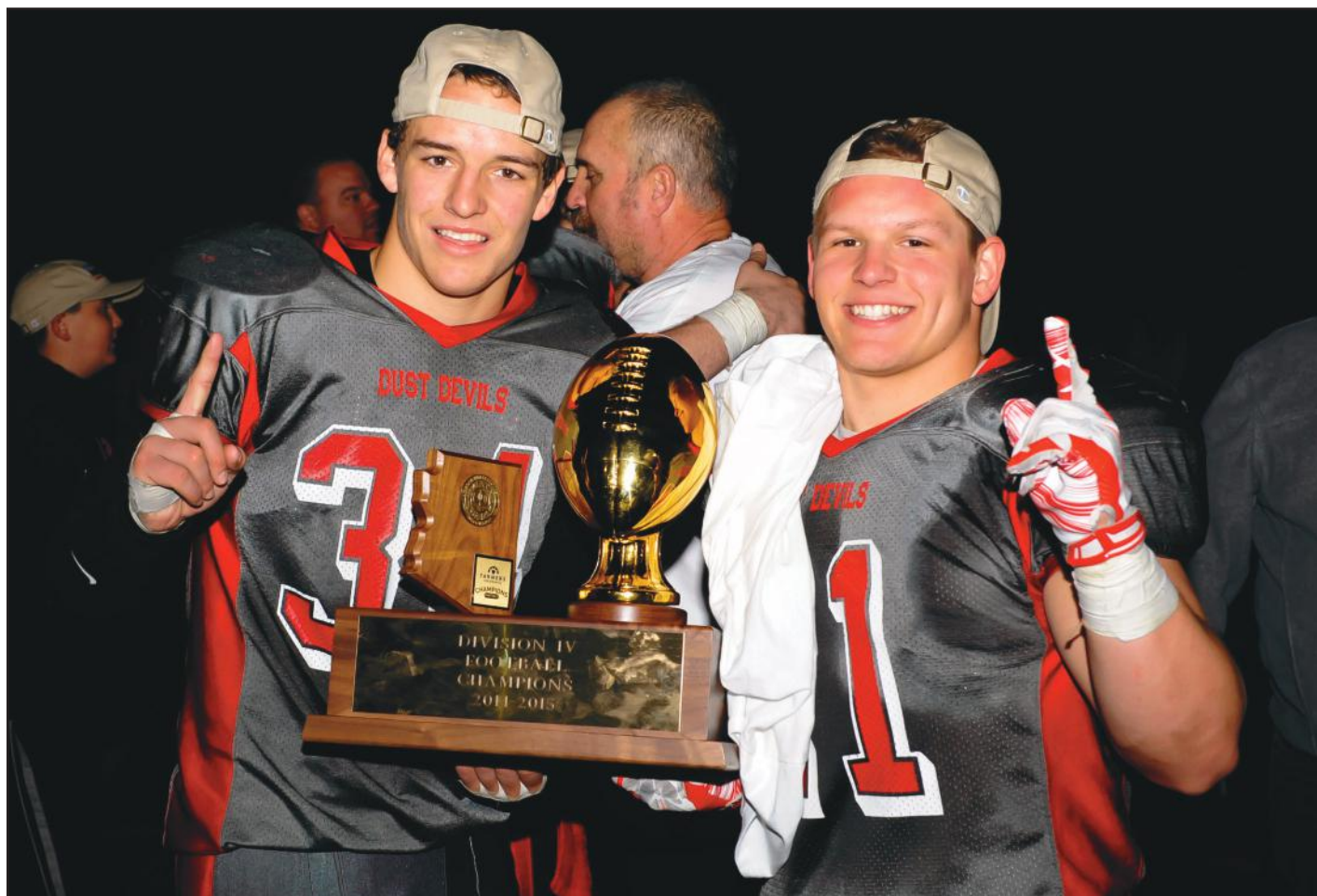
Lee Williams: Eugene Kramer will be leading his first senior class at Lee Williams. This will be the program's third year at the varsity level with Kramer guiding the Volunteers to a Division V playoff appearance last year. Now in Division IV, Kramer will have his complete starting lineup back including all-purpose player Sr. Dallas Morgan. Sr. quarterback Braxton Burgess returns as do Sr. running back Jason Ruiz and Jr. Andrew Davis, Sr. linemen Jerry Jones and Kaleb Smith, Sr. receiver Landon Kramer and Sr. cornerback Russell Cottrell.

Mohave: Rod Holmes is in his third year with the Thunderbirds. The program has been out of the playoffs since 2009 and the Thunderbirds have not had a winning season since 2007. Holmes hopes to change that with senior running back Jason Urquiza returning along with junior Josh Fisk.

Parker: Jeston Lotts guided the Broncs to one of the best seasons in school history last year and hopes to build upon that success but he will have to fill in almost every spot from last year. Gone are his quarterback Cody Esquerria along with his top six rushers, top five receivers and top four defenders. Sr. defensive back Jonathon McTarsney returns.

River Valley: Paul Duchaineau and Mark Ruckle led the Dust Devils to their first state championship last year and the co-head coaches finished with a 13-1 record in their first year in charge. Duchaineau controls the offense and Ruckle the defense. Only one starter returns from the offensive side but eight return on the defensive side including Sr. Jacob Lee, Sr. Andres Galvez and Sr. Brent Vegas. Quarterback Brady Viles and the state's second all-time leading rusher, Brandon Long, graduated which will lead to a new offense according to Duchaineau.

Football Division IV Preview



River Valley linebacker Jacob Lee (#34) is back for his senior campaign (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com).

Wickenburg: Head coach Carson Miller returns for his second year with the Wranglers. A former all-state performer during his playing days at Wickenburg, Miller is hoping to revive the program back to its glory days. The Wranglers have not had a winning record since 2010. Miller returns 14 starters from last year but he lost his top three rushers and his top receiver to graduation. Sr. Will Patton returns to run the offense along with Sr. running back Zayne Arnt and Jr. Riley Schuck. Sr. linebacker Giancarlo Horcos and Jr. lineman Robert Moralez also return. "We are returning a lot of starters from last years team," Miller wrote. "All have familiarity in the system and the way we operate."

SECTION IV

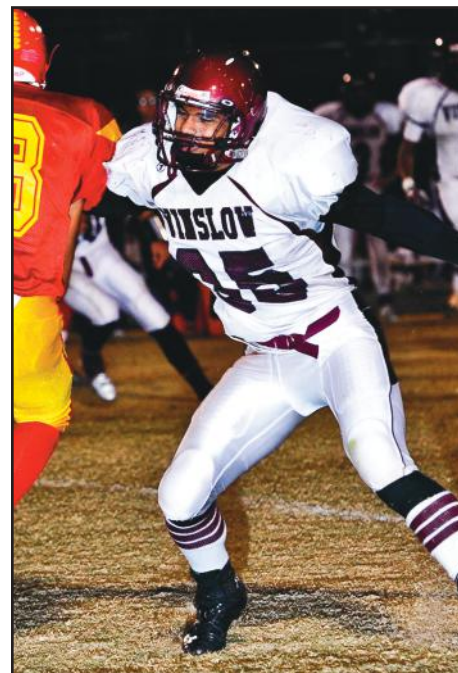
Bourgade Catholic: Pat Lavin is in his fifth year with the Golden Eagles. He will guide Bourgade Catholic from Division V to Division IV. Sr. quarterback Luke Dreher (1,710 passing yards) returns along with a complete crew of running backs: Jr. David Aguilar, Jr. Robert Mendoza, Sr. Peter Stalzer and Sr. Eric Dominguez.

Cortez: Ross Luna is in his fourth year with the Colts. Senior standout Dizaya Dunn returns but Luna feels the quarterback position remains the big question mark for the season. CHS hasn't had a winning season since 2005.

Dysart: Quarterback Gilbert Vilallabos (2,539 yards passing, 26 TDs) graduated as did the team's top six rushers. Kwasi Okafor returns for his senior season. He pulled down 728 yards. Sr. cornerback Tyree Taylor returns as does his fellow defender Sr. Andres Diaz. The Demons finished 4-6 last year.

Estrella Foothills: Lamar Early has turned the Wolves into one of the more successful programs in Division IV. He took a 2-8 squad into a playoff contender in one year and has made the playoffs every year since 2012. Joe Logan is one of the top running backs in the state and he returns for his senior year after gaining 1,591 yards last year with 19 touchdowns. Unfortunately, Early will have to replace quarterback Jared Fleming and a crew of receivers.

Football Division IV Preview



(From L to R) Coolidge's Charles McCarty (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com), Estrella Foothills RB Joe Logan (photo by Steve Paynter of Paynter's Pics) and Winslow LB Akkem Foster (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com)

Glendale: Brian Bowman is in his third year of rebuilding the Cardinals. His last two teams have won a total of seven games, which is almost as many as the program had from 2008 to 2012 combined. His Sr. quarterback, Carlos Meza, threw for 2,016 yards last year and his top receiver Jr. Curtis Barrientos (656 yards rushing) also returns. Jr. running back/receiver Byron Bowen also returns. Top defender Alex Vo is back for his senior year.

Northwest Christian: David Inness is starting his sixth year. The Crusaders have won at least nine games a year since 2008 and there should be no reason why the squad can't match that total with 16 starters returning. Top players include, Sr. Ben McGriff, Sr. Parker Valerious, Sr. Travis Pollay, Sr. Drew Inness, Sr. Ray kindred, Jr. Bubba Ponce, Sr. Tanner VanHofwegen, Nathan Beyeler and Sr. Logan Byers.

Youngker: Kelly Epley is taking over the Roughrider program. The former Agua Fria, Greenway and Glendale Community College coach has the difficult task of leading a team with only 12 wins in its existence (2009), including an 0-10 season last year. Sr. Isacc Garcia, Sr. Jalen Willis, Jr. Jabril Gray, Kyler Gray, Enrique Garcia, Alex Rodriguez and Bobby Stinson will be key this year. "We are absolutely starting everything from scratch," said Epley. "No one is entrenched in "their" position and everyone is doing everything new and from scratch including me and my coaching staff."

Yuma Catholic: With a record of 93-13, Yuma Catholic coach Rhett Stallworth should reach 100 wins sometime near the end of the regular season. Since 2010, Stallworth has guided the Shamrocks to four Division V championship appearances and three championships, including the last two in a row. Stallworth has won at least 10 games since 2007 and he will not put that record to test in Division IV. Only four starters return on offense and four on defense. Still Stallworth is optimistic: "They know how to win. Will be able to throw the ball as usual."

SECTION V

Casa Grande: Jake Barro is in his first year with the Cougars. With only six winning season in 35 years (the last being in 2006), Barro was called upon by former University of Arizona and NFL standout Randy Robbins to turn the program around. Robbins is in his second year as the school's athletic director. Robbins held that position in 1997-98 before he turned to coaching. Already a change, the Cougars lifted weights and participated in passing leagues over the summer. Jr. quarterback Brock Hall (1,876 yards passing) returns as does his main target Jr. Trevor Russell (1,076 receiving).

Combs: Jesse Hart took over a struggling program and led the Coyotes to two playoff appearances in his first two years on the job. "Our key players this year are going to be Sr. Todd Goodman at MLB, Jr. Fide Quirarte at FS, Sr. Coda McLaws at DE/TE, Sr. Todd Avery, Jr. Sheldon Pear-

Football Division IV Preview

son and Jr. Kyle Flake at OLB," Hart wrote. Replacing his offensive and defensive line is his main concern.

Coolidge: Cayle Ferguson has posted three 10-win seasons since he took over the Coolidge program in 2009. More recently, the Bears went 10-2 in 2013 and 2014. Running back Charles McCarty gained 1,271 yards rushing and 439 passing last year and returns for his senior season. Junior quarterback Tyler Stewart returns as does receiver Trenton Davis. McCarty accounted for almost half of the points scored for the Bears.

Coronado: Mike Olson is in his second year with the Dons and former ASU standout Rudy Carpenter will be the quarterback coach this fall. Coronado made the playoffs in 2010 when the program was in the old 4A-II Conference. Senior quarterback Travis Malloy returns as an option to replace Justin Conrad. Sr. running back Victor Caison Washington and Sr. receiver Braden Pixley return to lead the offense and Sr. linebacker Alex Ventura will hold down the defense.

Florence: Scott Howard will take over head coaching duties at Florence. The sudden death of Steve McKane in the middle of the 2013-14 season still weighs heavily on the community. Only 38, McKane suffered a heart attack six games into the season and his father Bill McKane served out the rest of the year to honor his son's memory. Bill stayed on and led the Gophers a playoff spot last year. Now a senior, Beau Griego returns to lead the team on the field. Griego turned in 1,376 yards rushing and led the team with 77 tackles.

Fountain Hills: Jim Fairfield is the only coach the Falcons have ever known. After 23 years, Fairfield retired and longtime coach Willie Dudley is set to take over. Sr. defensive lineman Jordan Max returns from a starting lineup that has been hit hard by graduation. The top eight offensive weapons graduated along with six of the top defenders.

SECTION VI

Amphitheater: Jorge Mendivil is entering his second year with the Panthers. Twelve starters return, including Jr. Ezra Thomas, Jr. Aariq Quick, Sr. Taylor John, Sr. Hector Silva, So. David Watson, Jr. Michael Beach and Sr. Nathan Medina. "David Watson started all 10 games as a freshmen last season and has improved by leaps and bounds in the off season," Mendivil wrote. "The sky is the limit for this kid. Will be attending prospect camps at Arizona and Oregon." Watson was later named the MVP of the Oregon camp.

Cholla: The Chargers graduated only a handful of starters

so this will be a senior-heavy squad this year. Sr. Bobby Vega-Rodriguez returns to run the offense.

Flowing Wells: Mark Brunenkant is in his seventh year with the Caballeros. He took the team to a 7-0 record to start last year but did not qualify for the playoffs. He is all set this fall with Sr. quarterback Julio Sandoval returning along with Sr. running back Dionte Flores and Jr. Dylan Valenzuela. Sr. receiver Tyler Stiltner also returns. Should be a playoff team this year.

Pusch Ridge: The Lions make a shift to Division IV after several years of success at the Division V level. Troy Cropp is in his fourth year. Thirteen starters return including Sr. James Raica, Sr. Cody Cropp, Sr. Ben Walker, Sr. Connor Kleinsasser, Connor Nichols, Jr. Edwin Lovett and So. Tamrat McLeod. According to Cropp, Walker and Raica are being recruited along with Sr. Grant Alter. Cropp believes returning players at key positions and commitment of all varsity players is the team strength but is concerned with injuries due to the lack of depth larger schools have.

Rio Rico: David Rastovski is in his second year with the Hawks. Junior quarterback Sean Fanning returns as does Sr. running back Victor Cazares.

Sahuarita: Rodney Day was an assistant at Sahuarita for 15 years but he takes over with the move of successful coach David Rodriguez to Oceanside, Calif. The Mustangs went 12-1 last year but standout quarterback Calvin Jenkins graduated. Sr. Damion Hill saw some playing time last year at QB and is a senior this year. Sr. Dyllan Dutton returns to rushing duties and Sr. Allyn Williams is the top receiver. Sr. linebackers Tanner Liddicoat and Jacob Ontiveros also return.

Walden Grove: First-year coach Chris May inherits a program that has only been in existence for three years. Since 2012, The Red Wolves have compiled a 17-14 record with a 7-4 campaign last year. Walden Grove qualified for the state playoffs with a balanced passing and rushing attack. Carlos Guerrero returns at the quarterback position for his senior season but the team lost standout linebacker and running back Ismael "Izzy" Calvillo to graduation. Guerrero threw for 216 yards against Safford in his first-ever playoff game appearance last year. May lists "Leadership and experience" as a team strength but has questions about his receiving corps. Returns 12 starters.

Moro's Thoughts on Son, Family, Not Record



Coach Paul Moro addresses his former team, Blue Ridge, after he won his 300th game (photo by Jose Garcia of azpreps365.com).

By Jose Garcia, azpreps365.com

For football coach Paul Moro, there was a reason why his son, Alex, wasn't cured.

What that reason is is in God's hands, Moro said. Alex committed suicide in July after an excruciating 10-year battle with a nerve disorder caused by a football injury.

Moro's unshakeable confidence in his Christian faith is helping him and his family cope with the loss of Alex, the youngest of Moro's three children. The Poston Butte coach is approaching Arizona's all-time football coaching record for wins, a mark he said he wouldn't have had a chance to reach without his family, assistant coaches and players, including Alex.

Alex played for his father during Moro's 30 years at Blue Ridge High, suffering an injury that went undiagnosed during Blue Ridge's 2001 undefeated state championship season.

"My faith is strong," said Moro during a recent interview while at the school he coaches at now, Poston Butte. "I'm not questioning why God didn't cure my son, and I do believe in miracles, because we've seen miracles happen. But it obviously doesn't change how you feel (about losing Alex). I don't know if I can put it in words. It would probably be best if I don't at this time."

Moro did express his gratitude for the strong show of support his family has received, which has helped the Moros beyond what anybody can imagine, he said.

In the 2001 season, Alex broke his first rib under his collarbone, but doctors didn't know it was broken until after the season, Moro said.

He said that the rib didn't heal properly, likely leading to nerve damage as Alex kept playing during his senior season. As a result of the nerve damage, Alex was diagnosed with reflex sympathetic dystrophy syndrome (RSD), a nervous system disorder, and then Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CPRS).

The pain would start in Alex's back and then shoot up his neck, triggering migraine headaches. He spent about a week out of every month in severe pain for more than 10 years, Moro said.

The Moros searched everywhere for the best care and a cure for Alex.

"My son and I were very, very close," Moro said. "He had excruciating pain. Not all of the times. Just a couple of times a month, where he couldn't sleep, eat or do anything."

Throughout this trying time, Poston Butte's football family hasn't

left Moro's side. The school's football coaching staff and some of the players traveled to a ceremony for Alex in Pinetop.

"We have a football team that loves me and proud to be associated with," Moro said.

Moro reciprocates that love.

His purpose in life is to use football to help steer his players toward productive lives, he said.

"I just deal with them like they are my sons," Moro said.

He's been rewarded with tremendous success, winning a state record 12 titles and is six wins away from breaking Vern Friedli's record (331-159-6) for the most wins by an Arizona high school football coach. Moro's win percentage (326-56 record) is an impressive 83.3 percent.

His current win total ranks him 23rd in the national high school football record book, and his win percentage is tied for 7th best nationally among coaches with 300 or more wins.

"People try to put me on a pedestal," Moro said. "But everything that happens deserves to be shared with every coach and player who has played for me."

"It's not just about me. It never was. I would be totally arrogant and egotistical and an idiot if I thought in that realm. Through faith God has put me in a position where he wants me to be."

It was believed that Moro would never leave the only school he had ever coached at, Blue Ridge, where he won his 300th game.

But it happened after the 2013 season, leaving Arizona's high school football community questioning why he left the school he loved so much. But Moro's love for his wife, Joyce, is much greater.

Joyce is a familiar face on Moro's sideline, keeping stats during her husband's games. But Lakeside's winters weren't good for Joyce, who has fibromyalgia and arthritis.

The move to Poston Butte and the warmer climate suits Joyce better. But part of Moro's heart is still at Blue Ridge.

That's noticeable when Moro uses the pronoun 'we' when he talks about the current state of Blue Ridge's football program.

"Nope. You can never go back," said Moro, 63, about the possibility of returning to Blue Ridge.

But he does wish the current Blue Ridge administration all of the best in its efforts to get the football program back to its winning ways. Moro is happy at Poston Butte, where he'll chase the No. 1 spot for coaching victories in Arizona. But breaking a record is the furthest thing from his mind right now.

"I'm surrounded by hundreds of people who are praying for me and my family," Moro said. "My son is in a better place." AZ's coaching win leaders

No. 1 Vern Friedli (331-159-6) Tucson Amphitheater

No. 2 Paul Moro (326-56) Poston Butte

No. 3 Jesse Parker (309-139-4) Gilbert

No. 4 Karl Kiefer (308-138-3) Phoenix Mountain Pointe

No. 5 Larry Fetkenhier (307-87-4) Cactus

No. 6 Mike Morgan (303-74-2) St. Johns

No. 7 Jim Rattay (303 wins) Cesar Chavez

No. 8 Richard Taylor (257-104-6) Centennial

No. 9 Norris Vaughan (241-97) Mountain Pointe

No. 10 Steve Belles (188-49) Hamilton

Division V Favorite is Joy Christian



Joy Christian's Matt Mitchell (photo by Kevin Abele of maxpreps.com).

By Jose Garcia, azpreps365.com

A football state championship trophy already resides in its trophy case.

This year's roster boasts more kids than ever before.

And it's our preseason No. 1 football team in Division V.

But Joy Christian's football program is still maturing.

The freshman and junior varsity football levels aren't offered at Joy Christian.

And with its enrollment (159 in 2014), Joy Christian belongs in Division-VI, where the football program won its only title. So to be the early 2015 state title favorite in D-V says a lot about job coach Brian Cole and his staff are doing, making due with what they have.

This year they have assembled the best football team to sport the royal, black and white of Joy Christian so far.

"I hope it all comes together, because we have a good team," Cole, entering his 13th season as head coach, said. "But I'm also a realist. Just because you have the talent doesn't mean it will work out in the end."

The twists and turns of a season begin as soon as Joy Christian travels to ranked teams San Tan Foothills and Round Valley in its first two games.

To avoid some of the pitfalls, Cole's staff is bringing its new defensive line and three rookie offensive linemen up to speed. But with the Goodspeed at wide receiver and experienced skill positions Joy Christian returns, catching up to Joy Christian will be tough this season.

Wideouts Isaiah Goodspeed and Dajuan Lawrence are matchup nightmares. Both of them are tall and strong and will be utilized in multiple ways on offense, defense and special teams.

Texas A&M and University of Arizona were among some of the schools that checked out Lawrence during the offseason. Goodspeed is a four-year starter and as a freshman played on the team that won Joy Christian's 8-man football title. At quarterback, Joy Christian has a valuable leader and a role model, Matt Mitchell, whose inspiring fight with cystic fibrosis has earned him high praise.

Mitchell also is the most technically sound quarterback Cole has worked with in 23 years of coaching high school football, Cole said.

"If Mitchell (5-8) was 6-2, he'd have 20 offers by now," Cole said.

New faces may dot Cole's defensive line, but he was also raving about another short player, sophomore nose guard Jonathan Herrera (5-10, 215).

Herrera is "unbelievably quick," especially his hands, thanks to his training as a boxer. But the strength of Joy Christian's 3-4 defense is its linebackers, senior three-year starters Riley Renner, Joey Morin and Brady Garrett and junior Tyler Graham.

The Dowe brothers, Andrew and freshman Arrick, the school's next Division I prospect at Joy Christian, will help man the secondary.

"Many things need to come into play for us to be successful," Cole said. "Talent alone doesn't do it."

Division V Preseason Rankings

By Jose Garcia, azpreps365.com

No. 1 Joy Christian: What it lacks is a proven running back and an experienced secondary. But the other high ranked teams have more holes to fill than Joy Christian. You can move around the next six ranked teams anywhere between No. 2-7. There's a lot of parity there.

No. 2 Arizona Lutheran: Changes are coming to one of the more successful small school programs in the state. Six-year coach Scott Indahl stepped down and the program lost another key figure, offensive coordinator Doug Meyer. Entrusted to keep the program on track is new coach Dave Peter. Peter served as an assistant and head coach at another winner, California Lutheran, for the past 16 years. Thankfully for AZ Lutheran, three-year starters QB Cameron Haag (85 career passing TDs, 6,273 career passing yards) and OL/DL Aaron Rosenbaum and 4-year starter TE Gabe Galvan haven't left.

No. 3 San Tan Foothills: The new coach is a familiar Arizona high school face, John Sanders, a four-time state champ while leading Saguaro. Athletic So. QB Manny Armenta will run the spread option Sanders ran at Saguaro. Expect TE Johnny Craig (6-3, 230) to get a lot of defensive attention and catches. Quarterback menace LB Caleb Ortiz (6-2, 215) recorded 24 sacks in the past two seasons. Sanders has some pull. He was able to drag another state championship coach from Saguaro, Mike Reardon, out of his "recliner" to join Sanders' staff.

No. 4 Tempe Prep: Yes, the team lost 18 seniors after its run as the first charter school to reach an AIA title football game. But never count out one of the grittiest programs in the state. The heart of the team, as always, is its offensive line, spearheaded by three-year starters Christian Gaylor (6-1, 250) and Jesse Cozans (6-3, 270). Sr. Isaiah Brittain (ACL last year) is healthy and secured the tailback spot. He is the sixth and final Brittain to play for his dad, coach Tommy Brittain. Sr. Gabriel LeBeau, Jr. Herman Flores and So. Max Rich were competing for the starting QB position. Connor Woltz was a guard last year but will move to fullback this year.

No. 5 Phoenix Christian: The program needs some stability after experiencing its third coaching change in as many seasons. But the positives are starting to roll in. The school kept Adam Olson, PC's defensive coordinator from 2012-13, as its head coach after some on-campus turmoil last year. Olson has six years of college coaching experience, including a stint as Arizona Christian University's defensive coordinator. Phoenix Christian should also benefit from its move from D-III to D-V. "We have talent, but a lot of that talent is unproven when it comes to producing in big time games at the varsity level," said Olson during the summer break. "There are position battles at each spot."

No. 6 Valley Christian: The Alijah Gammage Show will likely get significant airtime this year. As a freshman, Gammage (brother, Frederick, plays for ASU) had 35 catches for 680 yards and 10 TDs and made 5 interceptions. This year he was competing to start at QB and will start there or at WR. Last year, Valley Christian continued its climb to where it once was, reaching the playoffs for the first time in five years. This year, the program welcomed one of its largest first-year classes (35 freshmen).

No. 7 Round Valley: The good thing about all of those blowout victories in the regular season last year is that this year's youngsters got to play. The bad thing is that it was the final season for a couple of the team's field generals. But this is Round Valley, and the next herd of talented Elks are anxious to earn their stars. He might not look like much, but don't sleep on Oscar Cortez (5-8, 150), a RB/LB and all-state punter who can "pop" opponents. The team has to replace seven offensive starters and about the same on defense.

No. 8 Morenci: The ground and pound game must truly be back, because the first players the head coach mentioned were his offensive linemen. But what's more impressive about this team at this point is that the chemistry is already in place. Credit the senior leadership for that and 14 returning starters who came close to helping their team finish 7-3 last year.

No. 9 Paradise Honors: In its fifth season, the Surprise school already is primed to reach the playoffs for the first time. But it still has to defeat the top-flight teams before it is considered a contender. Coach Doug Provenzano spent the past three seasons on Brophy's staff. The 280-pound average girth on the line will help the team continue to run the ball effectively. Two-way senior starters OT/DT Josh Kratzer, QB Tommy Seros, RB Ethan Salcedo, WR/CB Chris Persons, and WR Josh Essegian have started since their freshman season. Essegian and Brandon Brown bring a lot of experience to its linebacker crew.

No. 10 Tonopah Valley: The program appears prepared to reach the big dance this year for the first time under very-motivated four-year coach Nick Gehrts. Seventeen returning starters, including 12 seniors, from a 5-5 2014 season are sure ready to join the playoff party this year after just missing out last year. OL/DL line coach Josh Oliver will take over play calling duties this year. Their playoff hopes might rest on how well their lines perform. The team's schedule is back loaded with its strongest opponents, which should give the offensive and defensive lines enough time to jell before it meets some of D-V's big boys.

Football Division V Preview

By Jose Garcia, azpreps365.com

SECTION I

Chinle: The coaches and players worked their tails off this offseason and hope the reward will be a better passing and tackling team. Six-year Coach Tim Su'e Su'e Liufau wasn't used to seeing his team lose like it did the past two seasons, but he's looking to turn that around with the help of seven senior starters, including QB Shane Begay, TE/DE Sheldon Tsosie, WR/FS Chandon Begay, and SS Rodney Nez.

SECTION II

Benson: Returns 22 lettermen, including 17 starters from an 8-3 2014 campaign. Jr. Keegan Graf (476 rushing last season, led team with 1,083 all-purpose yards, 82 tackles) and Sr. Nick Hernandez (9 TDs, 560

rushing last season) are the returning leading rushers for a team that averaged 293.9 rushing yards per game last season. Benson also returns all of its defensive stat leaders from 2014, including Sr. Clayton Gill (75 tackles last season), Jr. Tyson Coleman (438 receiving yards leader, 5 INTs), Jr. Brandon Laird (304 rushing last year, 81 tackles), and So. Taylor Finch (81 tackles). Team lost in the first round of 2014 playoffs.

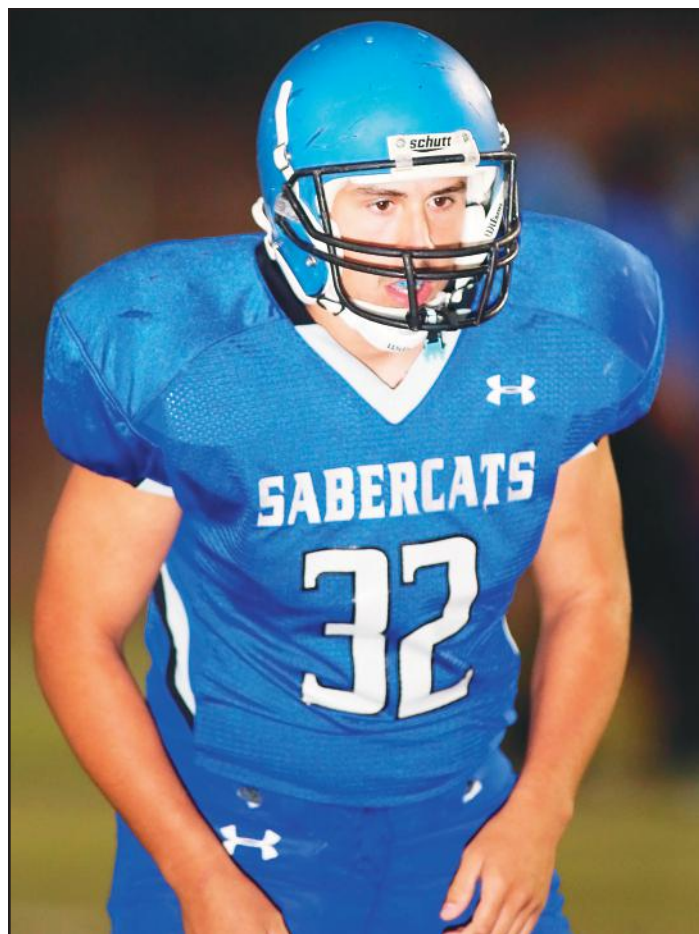
San Manuel: Welcome back, coach Dave Jungbluth. Jungbluth left San Manuel in 2000 to spend more time with his family and coach Pop Warner and junior high school football. Jungbluth's San Manuel teams won four region titles during his first go-around. This year's young team will run multiple offensive sets, and its defensive base will be 4-3. The returning starters are Sr. Michael Sanchez, Jr. OL/DE Antonio Gallego, So. S Jose Damian, and So. DE Fabian Russo, and Jr. OL Robert Allison.

Tanque Verde: Second-year coach Jeremiah Johnson and 17 returning lettermen, including six returning starters on each side of the ball, expect to be more competitive this season. "We are working to build a football program and should get better each year going forward," coach said. Sr. RB/DB Cisco McDonald was the team's second leading rusher last year but scored a team-high seven rushing touchdowns and was second on the team with 1,002 total yards. Tanque Verde also will lean on RB John Zaugra, LB Joey Gould and OL Jack Williams for leadership.

SECTION III

Camp Verde: Team will be young but more talented and athletic than in recent seasons. Playoff aspirations might rest on the shoulders of Jr. Trevor Heyer, who is moving from WR to QB this season. He showed off his field vision and accuracy during 7 on 7s. The defense needs to replace five starters but returners already have a grasp of schemes. Like Heyer, there's speed and ability at the tailback spot with Dakota Brueland and Ryan Loza but offense also needs to replace five starters. It's DL Reyes Herrera's turn to become a captain on defense.

Chino Valley: The program hasn't won at least five games in a year since 2010 but is hoping to change that with its move from D-IV to D-V. Second-year



San Tan Foothills DL Caleb Ortiz has 24 sacks in the past two years (photo by Chris Hook of maxpreps.com).

Football Division V Preview

coach Wade Krug is certainly bringing a big crowd (20 returning starters) with him. A strong underclassmen class will help add depth. The team was working on selecting a starting QB and settling on defensive line starters. Sr. RB/LB Michael Brillhart, Sr. OL/DL Eduardo Sotelo and Sr. Ath. Jerad Chavez have potential to play in college.

North Pointe Prep:

New head Ron Cluckey spent time on the coaching staffs of Mountain Ridge, Deer Valley and Cortez before moving to North Pointe. North Pointe graduated a big senior class last year, and Pluckey is currently evaluating his program.

Paradise Honors: The team will have an improved secondary, led by Persons, Salcedo and first-year players Rhett Livingston and Clay Duzy.

SECTION IV

Alchesay: Head coach Brandon Newcomb ran Alchesay from 2004-08, returned for the 2014 season and is back this year and so are nine defensive starters. The team only lost five seniors last year but four of them were linemen. A good core of skill players (QB Jalin Parrish, RB Kit Palmer, RB Eric Mitchell, RB Geron Beatty) also are back.

Holbrook: With Jr. QB/DB Cade Maestas, Sr. RB/DB Julian Garcia, Sr. OL/LB Jedde Bowman, and Sr. WR/DB Scottie Gishie, the offense is experienced. That should allow the team to be more creative on offense this year. Brady Pond is in his ninth season as a coach but first with Holbrook.

Round Valley: Jr. Kyron Woolf, a slot receiver last year, is moving to QB this year. "Kyron has good speed," fifth-year coach Marcus Bell said. "Watch him. He will be special."

St. Johns: Coach Tony Neubauer, the program's special teams coordinator the past four seasons, takes over as head coach. He was a varsity assistant in Iowa for eight years before arriving at St. Johns. "We haven't lowered the bar," Neubauer said. "We're going to work hard, be physical, and we expect to compete for a state championship year in and year out." OL/DL Ayden Overson is being looked at by Arizona Christian

and BYU. The team is returning 11 starters but was developing a starting QB, tailbacks and most of its secondary.

Window Rock: The program has had a .500 or better record every year since 2011. Its seven wins last year were tied for most in a season in the past decade. Second-year coach Greg Barker returns 13 starters but graduated all of his top skill players and leading tacklers last year. Look for Ohiya Salway, Tyrell Yazzie, Warren Scott, Dylan Begay, Rowan Lee, Adriano Kanuho, Marc Tulley, Emmanuel Curley, and Tyrell Begay to try and fill the void.

SECTION V

Antelope Union: A stronger running game (RB/DB Angel Esparza, RB/LB Rocky Nixon) and a bigger offensive line, led by Isais Valdez, should help Gary Mauldin's squad score more points this year. With its big defensive front, the team is moving back to a 4-4 defense. Jr. Richard Baughn is the signal caller.

ASU Prep: Former University of Arizona and South Mountain great and nine-year pro with the Eagles Byron Evans, ASU Prep's coach, is ready to introduce his program as a first-year AIA full member. He'll have plenty of help, with 19 returning starters. The team finished 3-7 last year as an associate member. The program is located in downtown Phoenix and started five years ago with a flag football team. "We've grown by leaps and bound," coach said.

Arizona Lutheran: Get ready to hear the name of another future three-year starter, So. RB Liam Hauger, a lot.

Phoenix Christian: Jr. Matt Hocking rushed for 1,047 yards in 2014.

Scottsdale Christian: In his second season at the helm, Chuck Gibbs is shooting for a deep playoff run this year despite having to replace 11 starters and a 5-6 finish last year. The roster's size continues to swell thanks to the program's efforts under Gibbs, though. Sr. Will Lane is 6-3, 265 pounds (11 sacks, 74 tackles) and is one of the state's premier DL. He'll get a lot of help in the trenches from DE/OL Sr. Caleb Butler and Jr. TE/DE Zac Lane. The team was working this sum-

Football Division V Preview

mer on shoring up its offensive line and settling on a quarterback.

Tonopah Valley: Michael Carter is receiving Ivy League interest and is a good starting piece for Tonopah Valley on the offensive and defensive line. Sr. QB Jerry Aguilar averaged 125.8 all-purpose yards last season.

SECTION VI

Globe: Hoping to be more competitive than the previous two seasons and avoid injuries, Globe is lacking experience but not attitude and work ethic, coach Al O'Campo said. The key players for the team this season are LB/RB Ben Bergener, QB/DB Jonathan Martinez, RB/DB Daniel Sandoval, OL/DL Angel Curiel, and OL/DL Nick Jost. (Oh, Miami plays at Globe on Oct. 30 in the regular season finale for both teams.)

Miami: (Figures that Miami would follow 100-year rival Globe.) Unlike last year, when Miami lost 34-8 to Globe, Miami might put up a tougher fight this year since it only lost four starters and lost only two of its final five games in 2014, including a one-point loss to St. Johns. Coach Brandon Powell threw freshman RB Gabe Gomez and freshman QB Zabriel Saenz into the fire during the team's final games, but the young guns responded. The defense and offensive line is where you'll find most of the seniors. The offensive line needs to continue to grow and grasp the zone-read option so Miami can start sniffing the playoffs for the first time since 2010. To add to the Miami-Globe duel, former Globe assistant Barny Radke, who was at San Tan Foothills last year, is moving to Miami to teach and coach. His son, Joseph (6-4, 215), also is moving in to play WR and FS for Miami.

Morenci: The strong-willed Ty Manuz is only 5-6, 155, but the coaching staff has faith in him as its featured tailback this year. FB Sergio Garcia (6-0, 190) will be his running mate. Kyle Swan (6-5, 230) is expected to take over as QB. The front-seven is as good as any in this division.

San Carlos: San Carlos wants to bounce back after last year's so-so season. Two years ago the program won a school record five games, and eight-year coach Shawn Pietila believes this year's team can be just as

good or better than the 2013 squad. The offense has improved thanks to running backs Sr. Mason Newman and Wilbur Bennally III. Look for So. WR/CB Dorian Ganilla and Sr. QB/DE Al Case Jr. to have breakout seasons, coach said.

SECTION VII

Monument Valley: Head coach Bryan Begay is 45-43 in nine seasons. His team started strong last year, struggled in the middle but regrouped during the final stretch. The program still missed the playoffs for the first time since 2008, however. Almost every starter returns, so Monument Valley, which dropped one division, should bounce back this year. Joshua Young (1,600 passing yards, 16 TDs last year), Xavier Hunt (600 receiving yards, six TDs last year) and DB Cauy Nelson were first-team, All-Section selections in 2014. LB/RB Jerron Bitloy is a three-year starter and team captain. Bitloy rushed for 500 yards and had 88 tackles last year.

SECTION VIII

American Leadership: A charter school in Queen Creek. Reach the postseason in the first season as an AIA member with a 9-2 record and folks quickly find out where you reside. The program is still young and so are its players, but it is capable of duplicating last year's success. Jr. LB/TE Donovan Hannah, a 6-4, 215-pound transfer from Queen Creek, sat out last year but will contribute heavily this season. Sr. G Mason Ferrin and his line will pave the way for Jr. tailback Jeremiah Boyd (1,300 yards, 11 TDs last season) and Jr. QB Dallin Edwards (1,100 rushing, 1,092 passing, involved in 36 TDs in 2014). The squad returns 15 starters but will have to replace its best two linemen.

Benjamin Franklin: Dave Jeffries (30-7 at Thatcher High in 3 years) moved to Benjamin Franklin to lead the second year program. All of Benjamin Franklin's 2014 players are returning, including the No. 1 offensive threat, Taylor Chambers, a difficult to take down Jr. RB/DE. Sr. WR/DB Elijah Jackson is good in the air and athletic. Sr. LB/RB Tyler Jorgensen is only 5-5, 150 but is the best returning defensive player. He's "great on the blitz and has a nose for the ball." Jr. LB/RB Tyrik Myers also figures to play a big role on both sides of the ball as well as Sr. TE/DE Chad Jef-

Football Division V Preview



Round Valley's Oscar Ortiz (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com)

since 1982, making stops in Cleveland, Ohio, Minnesota, and Desert Mountain High.

Sedona Red Rock: John Bradshaw has 12 years of coaching experience but is in his first season as head coach and third with Sedona Red Rock. "We plan on making our offense less predictable and have a relentless D," coach said. Bradshaw will get to work with twenty-one returning lettermen, including Sr. WR Timmy Hall, Sr. OL/DL Derrick Johnson, QB/RB/LB Justice Keans and RB/FS Chas Resaigno, and ten new players.

Tempe Prep: Sr. Gabriel LeBeau, Jr. Herman Flores and So. Max Rich were competing for the starting QB spot.

fries and So. OL/DL Justin Scott. The team played without any seniors last year and went 4-7.

Pinon: The team is returning 15 starters. The key players are Zack Cody, Kevin Tso, Tristan Ranger, Josh Sam, Sheldon Natoni, Ian Nez, and Garrick Haskan. With so much experience on the team, Pinon's goal is to reach the playoffs this year.

Santa Cruz Valley: A lot of familiar faces are back since 80 percent of last year's roster was filled with sophomores. The program won three games in 2014, but it's been six years since the seven-time state champ won that many games. QB/FS Emilio Cosillos, OG/DT Eduardo Gaspar, WR/CB Tony Jimenez and WR/DE Nate Neal are part of the junior class that is trying to rebuild the program.

Scottsdale Prep: David Sedmak (129-70 overall) takes over a program that is accustomed to winning but has had three different head coaches the past three years. Prolific TD passer Nick Smith is gone but 14 starters are back. "If we can stay injury free and develop some depth, the team can have a solid season," Sedmak said. RB/LB Jake Powers was injured last season but figures to play a big role this season. Sr. LB Seaghan McBride had a team-high 79 tackles last year. Sedmak has been coaching high school football

Connor Woltz was a guard last year but will move to fullback this year.

Tuba City: The team is rebuilding this year but Sr. QB Roland Becenti and Jr. LB Brandon Whiterock can help the young players develop. Coach Rick Benjamin still wants his boys succeed. The team is young on both sides of the ball.

Valley Christian: Valley Christian was searching for a center, an important spot on the team since it mostly operates out of the gun. Sr. Michael Gay (655 rushing yards, 8 TD's last year) is back to carry the rock.

Veritas Prep: The program hasn't experienced a plus-.500 season, but that might change with Jim Ellison on board. Ellison reached the playoffs four times in as many years with Arcadia and wants Veritas Prep to reach the playoffs this year. RB/LB Ted Crane, OL/DL Slade Schneider, OL/DL Videl Minson, QB/DB Aneurin Minson, and TE/DL Sebastian Bautista are part of a group that returns five starters on each side of the ball.

Arizona High School Individual Records

TOUCHDOWNS (Game)

5A	7; Ted Bland	Tucson vs Bisbee	1931
	7; Coury Hankins	South Mountain vs Phoenix Central	1994
	7; Antrel Bates	Tucson Amphitheater vs South Mountain	1997
4A	10; D.J. Foster	Scottsdale Saguario vs. Peoria Sunrise Mountain	2011
3A	8; Trent Thompson	Chinle vs Red Mesa	1986
2A	8; Jabari Felton-Smith	Orme School vs Salome	2000
	8; Carlos Villa	Maricopa vs Winterhaven San Pasqual, CA	2004
1A	10; Vincent Alvarado	Seligman vs Canyon State Academy	2004

TOUCHDOWNS (Season)

5A	41; Bobby Wade	Phoenix Desert Vista	1998
4A	51; Nathan Wize	Tucson Sabino	1997
3A	38; Scooter Sprotte	Lakeside Blue Ridge	1994
	38; Brandon Long	Mohave Valley River Valley	2014
2A	44; Jabari-Felton Smith	Orme School	2000
1A	48; Chuck Antoni	Salome	1980

TOUCHDOWNS (Career)

5A	76; Mike Mitchell	Phoenix Brophy Prep	1990-92
4A	103; Christian Kirk	Scottsdale Saguario	2011-14
3A	98; Brandon Long	Mohave Valley River Valley	2011-14
2A	110; Casey Jahn	Phoenix Northwest Christian	2008-11
1A	95; Chuck Antoni	Salome	1977-80

POINTS (Game)

5A	42; Ted Bland	Tucson vs Bisbee	1931
	42; Coury Hankins	South Mountain vs Phoenix Central	1994
	42; Antrel Bates	Tucson Amphitheater vs South Mountain	1997
4A	50; C.R. Davis	Phoenix Moon Valley vs Phoenix Washington	2000
3A	48; Trent Thompson	Chinle vs Red Mesa	1986 (jr)
	48; Richard Zuniga	Arizona Boys Ranch vs Miami	1997
2A	54; Carlos Villa	Maricopa vs Winterhaven San Pasqual	2004
1A	60; Vincent Alvarado	Seligman vs Canyon State Academy	2004

POINTS (Season)

5A	246; Bobby Wade	Tempe Desert Vista	1998
4A	306; Nathan Wize	Tucson Sabino	1997
3A	258; Richard Zuniga	Arizona Boys Ranch	1997
2A	266; Jabari Felton-Smith	Orme School	2000
1A	314; Chuck Antoni	Salome	1980

POINTS (Career)

5A	456; Mike Mitchell	Phoenix Brophy Prep	1990-92
4A	626; Christian Kirk	Scottsdale Saguario	2011-14
3A	404; Jeremy Hathcock	Lakeside Blue Ridge	1988-90
2A	666; Casey Jahn	Phoenix Northwest Christian	2008-11
1A	688; Arley McNeil	Patagonia	1985-88

Arizona High School Individual Records

RUSHING YARDS (Game)

5A	380; Jeremiah Cornist	Avondale La Jolla vs. Surprise Valley Vista	2008
4A	516; Sean Fitzsimmons	Empire vs. Tucson Catalina	2013
3A	469; Stanley Jackson	Chinle vs Red Mesa	1976
2A	419; Riley Mawson	Miami vs. Ray	2011
1A	477; Ozzie Anaya	Elfirda Valley Union vs Bowie	1985

RUSHING YARDS (Season)

5A	2,740; Mario Bates	Tucson Amphitheater	1990
4A	3,573; Marcus Thomas	Tolleson	2002
3A	2,961; Scooter Sprotte	Lakeside Blue Ridge	1994
2A	2,583; Casey Jahn	Phoenix Northwest Christian	2010
1A	2,494; Dallyn Despain	Heber Mogollon	2013

RUSHING YARDS (Career)

5A	5,669; Mike Mitchell	Phoenix Brophy Prep	1990-92
4A	5,878; Marcus Thomas	Tolleson	2000-02
3A	6,750; Brandon Long	Mohave Valley River Valley	2011-14
2A	7,544; Casey Jahn	Phoenix Northwest Christian	2008-11
1A	5,760; Arley McNeil	Patagonia	1985-88

TOUCHDOWN PASSES (Game)

5A	7; Dalton Sneed	Scottsdale Horizon vs. Mountain Ridge	2013
4A	9; Luke Rubenzer	Scottsdale Saguaro vs. Goodyear Desert Edge	2013
	9; Mason Crossland	Gilbert Higley vs. Apache Junction	2014
3A	9; Rathen Ricedorff	Show Low vs. Chinle	2009
	9; Gabe Losada	Saint Mary's vs. Camelback	2013
2A	7; Jarrett Huma	Hopi vs Valley Sanders	1988
	7; Tim Rattay	Phoenix Christian vs Maricopa	1994
	7; Nick Smith	Scottsdale Prep vs. Camp Verde	2013
		Scottsdale Prep vs. Sequoia	2013
	7; Jagan Cleary	Yuma Catholic vs. Round Valley	2013
1A	10; Bailey Anderson	Gilbert Christian vs. Mesa Prep	2013

TOUCHDOWN PASSES (Season)

5A	46; Bryce Perkins	Chandler	2014
4A	61; Luke Rubenzer	Scottsdale Saguaro	2013
3A	55; Rathen Ricedorff	Show Low	2010
2A	45; Nick Smith	Scottsdale Prep	2013
1A	50; Aidan Wright	Scottsdale Prep	2011

Mogollon Favored in Division VI

By Jose Garcia, azpreps365.com

A check of the list of former 8-man champs reveals that Division VI is home to some of the more persistent football programs in the state.

Take Pima, for example. The span between Pima's first state championship appearance (1961) and its most recent (2012) is 51 years.

Other 8-man oldies but goodies, such as St. David and Joseph City, also exist. They say consistency is a mark of a champion, and that is so true for Arizona high school 8-man football.

As the aforementioned programs, this year's preseason D-VI favorite, Mogollon, also has proven it can stand the test of time.

The first state championship rodeo the Heber program roped was in 1994, when Mogollon was crowned co-champ along with Mayer. To help achieve longevity, hire the right men, and in Mogollon's case, hire them again.

Tim Slade was the head man on the sidelines for Mogollon in 2015. Who was Mogollon's head coach in 1994? Slade of course.

Slade, who first joined Mogollon in 1993, eventually left the school to coach elsewhere but returned in 2003. While Slade was gone, Mogollon had another ace up its sleeve, coach Ron Tenney, who won two titles at the school before leaving to develop Snowflake into a winner.

Guess who's back at Mogollon this year? Tenney of course.

Tenney will help out the team when his job as superintendent allows him.

Another integral part of Mogollon's staff is defensive coordinator, Rick Samon, a coach at the school since the late 1990s.



The Mogollon Mustangs, moments after capturing the 2014 Division VI State Championship (photo by Jim Willittes of maxpreps.com)

"Part of the secret to longevity is coaching," Slade said. "We also have a great community with tough kids. If you show consistency, the kids know what to expect."

It helps that Mogollon is a model of consistency.

But welcoming back five two-way starters (OL/DL Turley Barr, RB/LB Hunter Cochran, OL/LB Grant Cooper, QB/DE Brock Slade, OL/LB Baylend Stephens) from Mogollon's first ever undefeated season also helps elevate its preseason favorite status. Brock, Tim's son, is the starting quarterback and is expected to carry more of the load this year. The 6-foot-2, 255-pound Stephens (season-high 22 tackles in last year's championship game) is a load all by himself.

Keeping with the oldie but goodie theme of D-VI, this year Joseph City is bringing back coach Eldon Larson, who guided Joseph City to a title — in 1999.

Division VI Preseason Rankings

By Jose Garcia, azpreps365.com

No. 1 Mogollon: Mogollon lost a very productive senior running back and senior wide receiver last year. A handful of teams will compete for a state title that is up for grabs this year. Coach Tim Slade is 64-9-1 at Mogollon, 78-24-1 overall.

No. 2 Gilbert Christian: The 2015 Knights coming off the assembly line are fast. They also have a lot of horsepower after the entire team committed to offseason workouts for the first time. Needless to say, this is the best team coach Larry Cain has assembled in his five seasons at the school. After two state semifinal endings, the 2015 Knights are fully loaded, poised to reach the final this year. Six two-way starters are back. So. Brayden Finkbeiner, the purest QB Cain has worked with, can't wait to connect with Jr. All-State WR Caleb Young.

No. 3 Pima: Close doesn't cut it for Pima, which isn't making excuses for not winning the title in recent years. But the postseason disappointments aren't keeping the Roughriders from chasing that elusive title this year. Pima is hoping that RB Curtis Hancock's recent knee injury isn't as bad as it looks, however. FB/TE/LB Johny Boren (6-2, 240) is a bull on each side. The very quick Parker Blair is moving under center this year. The Carson twins, Justin and Jarred, added strength, pounds for their defensive line duties this year.

No. 4 Bagdad: After muscling its way to two consecutive state title appearances, the team is transforming into the speedy Sultans this season. But the goal remains the same. "Our expectations are to reload and make another run deep into the playoffs and challenge for titles," coach Dalton Mills said. Four-year starter at DB Austin Acorta and his 4.6 speed is also heading to the backfield. With multiple fast WR's, Bagdad wants to also spread people out more this year.

No. 5 Valley Lutheran: A strong defense and special teams. A new coach. Powerful run attack. Are these the ingredients that'll help bring the school its first state championship? Sr. 6-4, 205 RB Elijah Bowie (1,812 yards, 26 TD's last year) can carry the team if need be. But with G/LB/FB Grayson Undrill, WR/DE Layne Torrey, LB/TE Michael Landtiser, QB/DB Clark Zimmerman, and OL Jack Standsbury, Bowie and has plenty of help.

No. 6 Williams: Williams is the new kid that everybody wants to get to know in Division VI. The interest is based on Williams' performances in Division V. Last year was the first time that Williams didn't reach the playoffs during coach Jeff Brownlee's six seasons as coach. This year's team is young and likely a year away from really competing for a title. But then again teams will have to adjust to Williams' offensive talent and one of the best offensive and defensive lines Williams has worked with.

No. 7 Superior: This might be the most talented team coach Ryan Palmer has worked with in his eight years at Superior. Every returner (16 lettermen, 12 starters) has playoff experience, including every junior and senior. But as with almost every 8-man team, depth is a question mark. Last year, Jr. QB Nicolaus Cruz



Mogollon quarterback Brock Slade (photo by Jim Willittes of maxpreps.com)

threw 24 TD's and only 5 INT's and rushed for 1,061 yards and 19 TD's. RB/LB Edgar Galindo was second on the team with 750 rushing yards and 12 TD's and first with 104 tackles last year.

No. 8 St. David: The team is still young but not as much as last year, when it went 5-4 and reached the playoffs. The 2014 stat leaders are still with the team, captains Mitchell Mayberry, Johnny Schmidt and Travis Davis. Schmidt rushed for 561 yards, had a team-high 107 tackles and was second on the team with 10 TDs last year. Davis threw 19 TD's and Mayberry scored a team-high 12 TD's in 2014.

No. 9 Valley Union: Half of the team's two-way starters return to try and improve on last year's 7-3 mark. The team was waiting on QB Jose Gamez to get cleared to play. Gamez is also a running threat for a team that averaged 280 yards per game on the ground last year. Jaret Luzania rushed for 1,108 rushing yards and 13 TDs last year and is cleared to take off for another big season. Clearing the runway for Luzania is a strong offensive line. The secondary is the only question mark on defense.

No. 10 Salome: The team is aiming for a section title and first round home playoff win. The Frogs graduated only four starters from a team that went 5-4 and reached the first round of the 2014 playoffs. But the quick team, which dressed only 15 players last year, needs to keep its players healthy if it wants to achieve its goals.

Football Division VI Preview

By Jose Garcia, azpreps365.com

SECTION I

Fredonia: The program has experienced its share of struggles in the past decade, but this year's young players are striving for a better outcome. But it doesn't help that the program has lost players to El Capitan, which is starting a program this year.

Joseph City: From one championship coach, John Bryant, who retired, to another, Eldon Larsen. Joseph City went back in time to find their new coach, Larsen, who coached at Joseph City in the 1990s and early 2000s and won a championship in 1999. The team was young (only three senior starters) last year and finished with a record. Team worked on strengthening its offensive line this summer, which should benefit its athletic skill players this year.

Mogollon: The dad-son connections on the team: Tim and son, QB Brock; assistant coach Dusty and sons Hunter and Jordan; assistant Abel Ballesteros and son Aaron. Slade and defensive coordinator Rick Samon have been coaching together for 12 years.

Williams: The D-line is good. We'll know a lot more about the team after its Week 1 game against Pima. Brownlee served 27 years as a highway patrolman before retiring and becoming a teacher. The program won its only state titles (1989 and 1993) in 8-man ball.

SECTION II

Duncan: Was 3-7 last year with a young team and lost three games that were winnable. Last year's sophomore class was strong, and some of those players will be asked to fill key spots, including backfield and line-backer positions. "We have a great chance of being a .500 team again," seven-year coach Eldon Merrell said. QB/DB Chris Corona, OL/DL Colin Decker, WR/DB Matt Lacey, C/DL Dominic Perez, Jon Bejarano, ATH Hunter Rapier, TE/DE Ashten Basteen are the team's key returning players.

Fort Thomas: Coach Will Hinton is heading into his 23rd year at the school with 12 returning starters. He wants his experienced team to be more physical on offense and defense this year. It'll have to be with the opponents on its schedule this year. Sr. QB Kyle Stringfellow (17 TD passes in 2014), RB/LB Dom Walker (869 rushing yards in 2014), WR/LB Kaine Langley (918



Mogollon DL Baylend Stephens (photo by Jim Willittes of maxpreps.com)

yards receiving last year, 8 TDs, last year), WR/DB Stacey Kitcheyan (7 INTs last year), and RB/LB Manny Carragoza are the go-to players.

SECTION III

Bagdad: Second-year TE Ben Loveall, a "crisp route runner with a knack for big catches," should benefit from the change to a spread offense. Junior DE Estefan Gonzales is stronger heading into this year after a 16-sack, 69 tackles 2014 season.

Glendale Prep: There was a major shuffle in the coaching staff, but head coach Jamie Self and Jr. QB Joey Balkisoon are still with the team. Glendale Prep also is glad to see RB/DE Jacob Thompson return after a concussion kept him from playing last year. Sr. OL/DL Kris Rapeta and a "skinny but tough guy," Jake Jahrmakt, are ready to get dirty in the trenches.

Football Division VI Preview



Valley Lutheran lineman Grayson Undrill (photo by Jim Willittes of maxpreps.com)

PDSD: Coach David Huber is pleased to see the line-men depth on this year's team and ten returning starters, including QB/TE Jesus Espinoza, OL Myron Lee Zartman-Bailey, CB Jayvon Lockhart, and LB Zeth Willis.

Valley Lutheran: The numbers in the junior class are low, but that won't keep the team from chasing the title.

SECTION IV

Ajo: The team returns 18 lettermen, including 12 starters and six seniors. Jr. Jacob Lewis passed for 1,568 and 22 touchdowns last year. Lewis' primary targets, Sr. WR Devin Rendon and Sr. WR Roberto Macillas, also return. Sr. DE Armando Herrera had 27 solo tackles and assisted on 22 in 2014.

Gila Bend: Keep an eye out for Gila Bend's much im-

proved program under second-year coach Fred Burkhardt. The players are taking care of business in the classroom as well, which is more important. With 13 starters back, including RB/DL Francisco Ruiz, RB/SS Austin Burkhardt, C Carlos Bernal, and WR/LB Patrick Villegas, Gila Bend plans on being a "major contender." The team's run defense should be better this year.

NFL Yet: Welcome to the AIA, NFL Yet. The school reached the Charter League state championship game in six of the past seven seasons, winning twice. The offensive and defensive lines, "the strength of the team," lost only one starter. Jr. QB/DE Isaac Ruiz is the captain. The junior class is strong with Saul Solis, Vic Garcia, Steve Hernandez, and Anthony Aravelo. The NFL awarded NFL Yet a \$1 million grant in 1995 and \$1.5 million in 2008. The charter school is operated by a faith-based nonprofit organization, Espiritu Community Development Corporation.

Salome: The team is aiming for a section title and first round home playoff win. The Frogs graduated only four starters from a team that went 5-4 and reached the first round of the 2014 playoffs. But the quick team, which dressed only 15 players last year, needs to keep its players healthy if it wants to achieve its goals. Sr. RB/DB Jared Wolfe, Jr. C/DL Thomas Rees and Jr. QB/DB Brian Castillo will lead the charge.

SECTION V

Arete Prep: The modus operandi of the team last year was to run first, pass later. Expect that to change this with its improved passing game. The defense also won't be as predictable, giving different looks out of different packages, coach Amy Arnold said. The defensive cog of the team will be Sr. LB Stephen Varner.

Baboquivari: Nothing against its opponents, but Baboquivari's cheering section in the state keeps growing. Folks want Baboquivari to taste success for the first time in long time. "We are bound and determined to break a seven-year losing streak," second-year coach Tom McGoldrick said. McGoldrick has turned around programs (Wickenburg, Ajo) and is hoping to do so again. Moving to 8-man football should help, but it's in a tough section. Let's hope all of the players McGoldrick was hoping to return to the program do come out.

Chandler Prep: The Titans head into its first Division VI foray with a new coach, Chris Goodman, a United State

Football Division VI Preview



Bagdad standout Austin Alcorta (photo by Jim Willittes of maxpreps.com)



Gilbert Christian QB Caleb Young (photo by Mark Jones of maxpreps.com)

Marine Corps veteran. Goodman joined the Marines in response to the 9/11 attacks. Goodman served as an offensive coordinator at Siuslaw High School in Oregon and as a JV coach at Combs before moving to Chandler Prep. "We've hired the best football coach for our community here at Chandler Prep," athletic director Shawn Lytle said. Sr. RB/S Joey Sortino, Sr. OL/DL Jay Kiley and Sr. WR/DB Jordan Cabrera are the key returning players.

Hayden: The Lobos went back in time to see if they can get their program to move forward with the hiring of former coach John Estrada. During his first run (2001-10) with the school, Hayden reached the playoffs eight times. Assistant coach Bob Bohrn played on the only state championship Hayden won (1972). This year, Estrada is introducing new offensive and defensive packages to his young team. Players to watch are Jr.

RB/LB Brandon Cruz, Sr. DL Antonio Trevizo, Jr. LB Ryan Donovan, So. DL Robert Bohrn, and So. OL Frankie Valencia.

Ray: The team is waiting to see who returns, but this more than likely will be a rebuilding year for Ray. Coach Willie Jordan is expecting at least only two seniors to play this year. But that isn't keeping Sr. RB/CB Jeron Coleman, Jr. RB/LB Paul Wormwood and So. QB Fabian Valenzuela from working their tails off, coach said. Coach Willie Jordan said he is fortunate to have assistant coaches Jason Wernett, Jimmy Fessenden, Freddy Cruz, and Michael Hing on his staff.

Superior: RB/DB Michael Salazar, rushed for 213 yards, caught 366 yards, had 40 tackles and scored nine touchdowns. WR/LB Austin Navarrete had 42 tackles last year.

2014 Div. I State Championship Bracket

Fri, Nov 7

Fri, Nov 14

Fri, Nov 21

Fri, Nov 28

Valley Vista (#16)

Hamilton (#1)

Skyline (#9)

Boulder Creek (#8)

Horizon (#12)

Desert Ridge (#5)

Perry (#13)

Brophy Prep (#4)

Highland (#14)

Pinnacle (#3)

Westview (#11)

Mountain Pointe (#6)

S.D. O'Connor (#10)

Basha (#7)

Red Mountain (#15)

Chandler (#2)

Hamilton

(52-15)

Skyline

(28-12)

Desert Ridge

(28-17)

Brophy Prep

(45-0)

Pinnacle

(69-40)

Mountain Pointe

(31-21)

Basha

(38-34)

Chandler

(54-14)

Hamilton

(21-14)

Brophy Prep

(21-7)

Mountain Pointe

(56-10)

Chandler

(55-0)

Hamilton

(24-7)

Chandler

(43-22)

Chandler

(28-7)

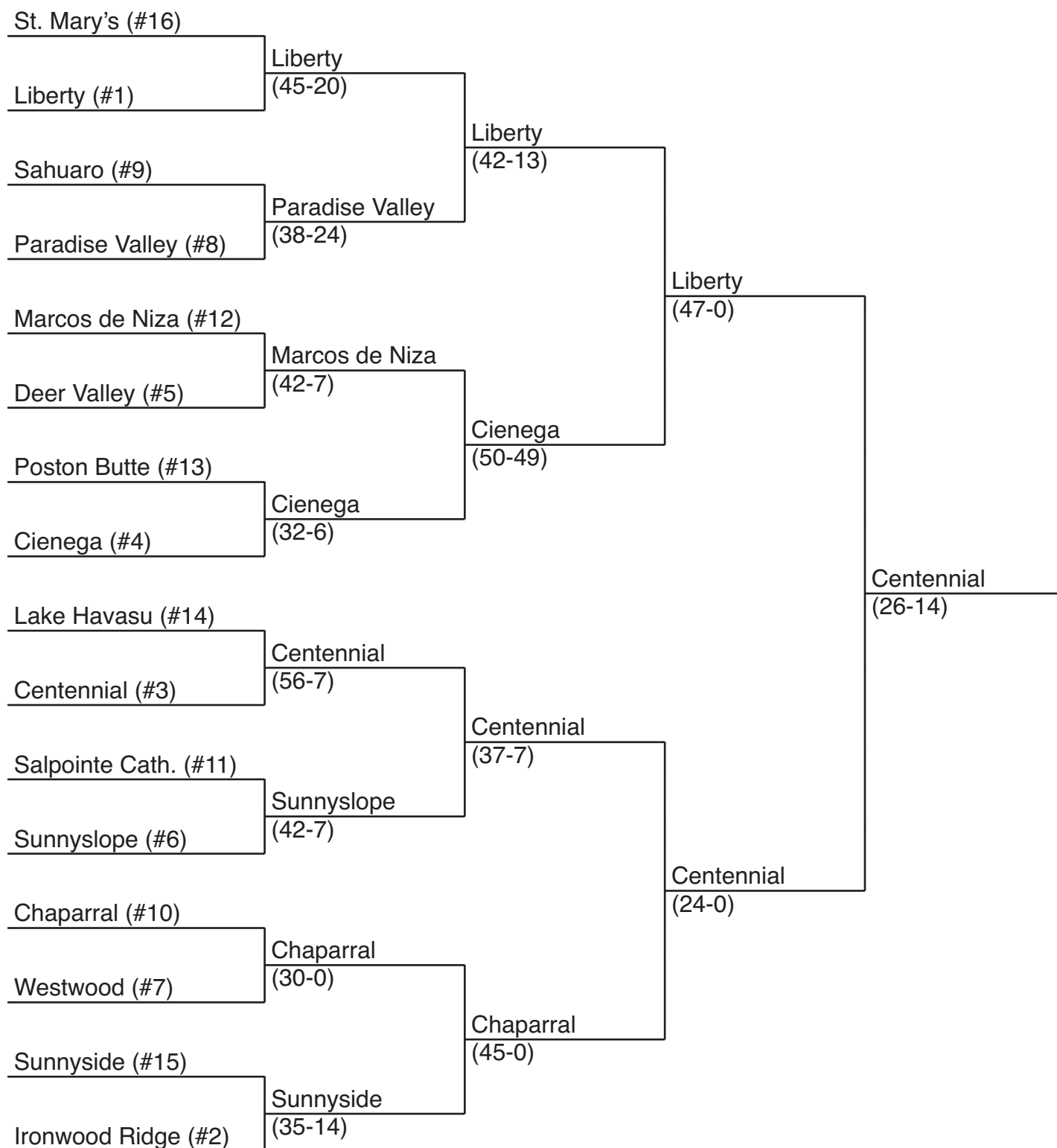
2014 Div. II State Championship Bracket

Fri, Nov 7

Fri, Nov 14

Fri, Nov 21

Sat, Nov 29



2014 Div. III State Championship Bracket

Fri, Nov 7

Fri, Nov 14

Fri, Nov 21

Sat, Nov 29



2014 Div. IV State Championship Bracket

Fri-Sat, Nov 7-8

Sat, Nov 15

Sat, Nov 22

Sat, Nov 29

Page (#16)

Seton Catholic (#1)	Seton Catholic (70-0)		
Parker (#9)		Seton Catholic (69-19)	
Winslow (#8)	Winslow (20-13)		
Florence (#12)			Snowflake (33-20)
Coolidge (#5)	Coolidge (41-35)		
Combs (#13)		Snowflake (48-19)	
Snowflake (#4)	Snowflake (54-12)		
Fountain Hills (#14)			River Valley (28-21)
River Valley (#3)	River Valley (60-14)		
Show Low (#11)		River Valley (21-14)	
Estrella Foothills (#6)	Estrella Foothills (19-13)		
Walden Grove (#10)			River Valley (36-33)
Safford (#7)	Safford (49-14)		
Blue Ridge (#15)		Sahuarita (42-21)	
Sahuarita (#2)	Sahuarita (42-0)		

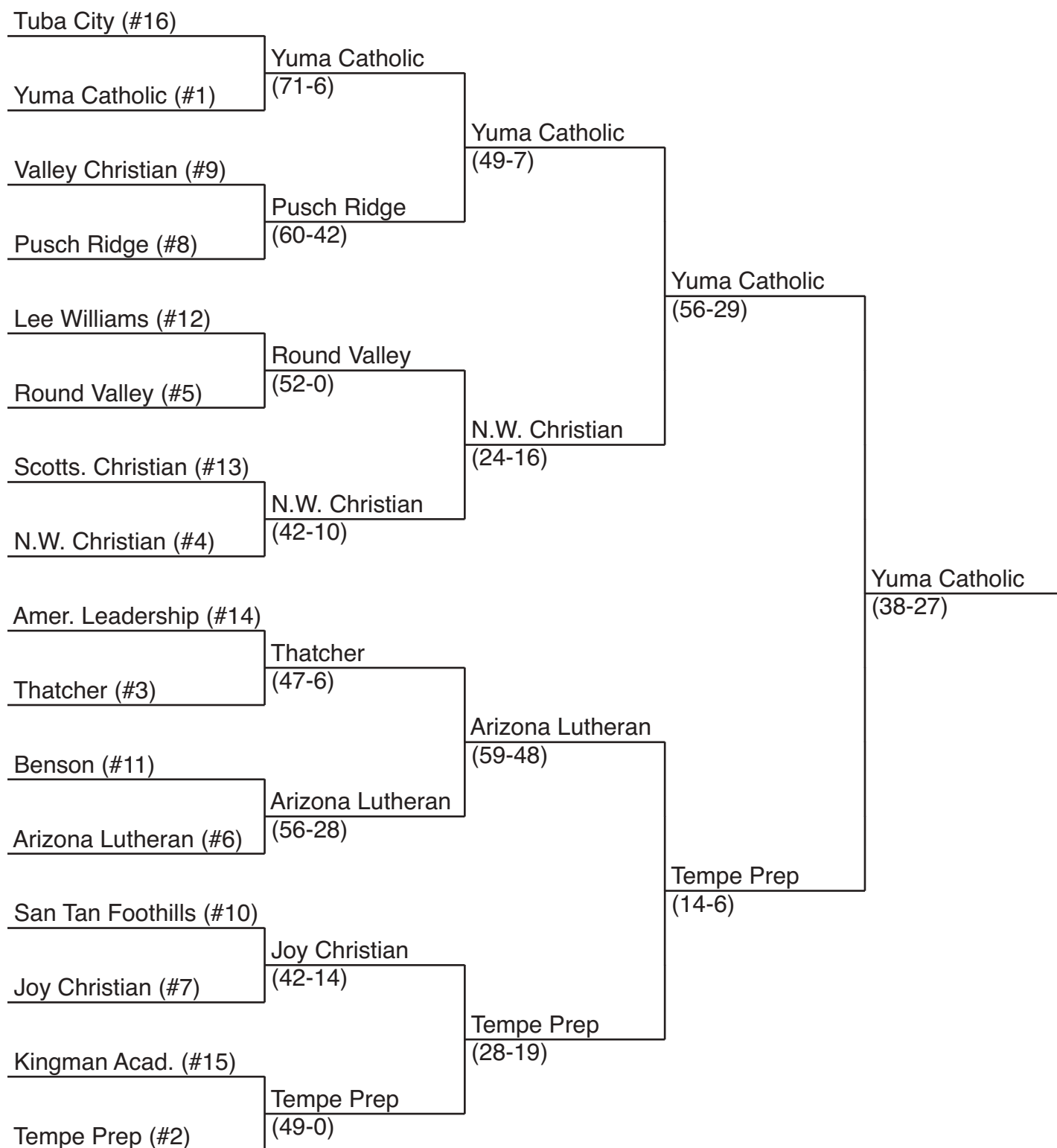
2014 Div. V State Championship Bracket

Fri-Sat, Nov 7-8

Sat, Nov 15

Sat, Nov 22

Sat, Nov 29



2014 Div. VI State Championship Bracket

Sat, Oct 25

Sat, Nov 1

Sat, Nov 8

Sat, Nov 15

Superior (#9)

Glendale Prep (#8)

Superior
(66-54)

Bagdad
(60-0)

Bagdad (#1)

Duncan (#12)

Valley Lutheran (#5)

Valley Lutheran
(70-16)

Gilbert Christian
(81-64)

Gilbert Chr. (#4)

Bagdad
(60-24)

Salome (#11)

Ray (#6)

Ray
(41-6)

Pima
(50-6)

Pima (#3)

Mogollon
(14-8)

St. David (#10)

Valley Union (#7)

Valley Union
(56-24)

Mogollon
(44-16)

Mogollon (#2)

Mogollon
(28-12)



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