

FIRST COAST VARSITY WEEKLY

Final 4 reunion at Fortegra hoops tourney

Clayton Freeman

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This year, Jacksonville gets a taste of the final four feeling.

Four state semifinal qualifiers from the 2022-24 season are set to tip off the High School 9:12 Fortegra Invitational boys basketball tournament returning for its seventh year from Dec. 7-9 at Florida State College at Jacksonville South Campus.

"It's an awesome opportunity for our student-athletes, and we look forward to it each year," Oakleaf head coach **Jason Price** said.

Oakleaf opens the event on Dec. 7 against Ribault at 2 p.m., followed by Providence vs. Paxon, North Florida Educational Institute vs. Ponte Vedra and Episcopal vs. Southwest Macon of Georgia.

For Providence head coach **Jim Martin**, the 2023 event is "by far the best" field in the tournament's history.

Ribault, Providence, NFEI and Ponte Vedra all qualified for last year's Florida High School Athletic Association final four. Meanwhile, Paxon made the final four three years ago, Oakleaf surged to 24-2 last winter and Episcopal returns two of Jacksonville's top prospects in **Kent Jackson** and **Grady Schwartz**.

"I love the matchups," said Ribault head coach **Charles Showers**, whose Trojans will return 2022-23 All-First Coast player of the year **Caleb Williams**. "There's no easy games for anybody."

The tournament announcement opened Tuesday's High School 9:12 Basketball Media Day at the Winston Family YMCA, which included dozens of Jacksonville-area schools and more than 100 players.

Among the other storylines Tuesday: Not present were several top 2022-23 players who transferred elsewhere for the coming season. Among others, Richmond-committed center **Jaylen Robinson** moved from Providence to DME Academy in Volusia County, while nationally-ranked prospect **Eris Lester** transferred from Orange Park to girls basketball juggernaut Montverde Academy in Central Florida.

Football guide for scoreboard watchers

Too early for scoreboard watching? Not in Week 10 football.

For fans of Northeast Florida teams on the bubble for FHSAA at-large berths, the games on their own scoreboards aren't the only ones to worry about.

As they cheer on their own schools, they're also watching for the possibility that at-large challengers elsewhere in their Florida regions could slip up -- with potentially big implications for their place in the FHSAA ranking formula.

Jacksonville-area bubble teams are everywhere, ranging from Creekside and Nease in St. Johns County to Episcopal, Jackson and Wolfson in the tightly-packed Class 2M race.

Here are the final games for several Florida schools that could snatch at-large berths from Jacksonville-area teams.

- Orlando Evans (Class 4M; in contention with Atlantic Coast); vs. Apopka, vs. Lake Nona
- Hagerty (Class 4M); vs. Spruce Creek, at Oviedo
- Tallahassee Chiles (Class 3S; in contention with Creekside, Nease, Toco Creek); vs. Tallahassee Lincoln, at Sunlake
- Tallahassee Leon (Class 3S); vs.



Providence's Chris Arias lines up a shot vs. Ponte Vedra in the teams' January meeting. The Stallions and Sharks are among four final-four qualifiers selected for the Fortegra Invitational in December. CLAYTON FREEMAN/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION



Bishop Kenny's Davis Johnson (6067), Alexis Holmes (6063) and Stephanie Gden (6062) run during the Katie Caples Invitational. CLAYTON FREEMAN/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION

Crestview, vs. New Smyrna Beach

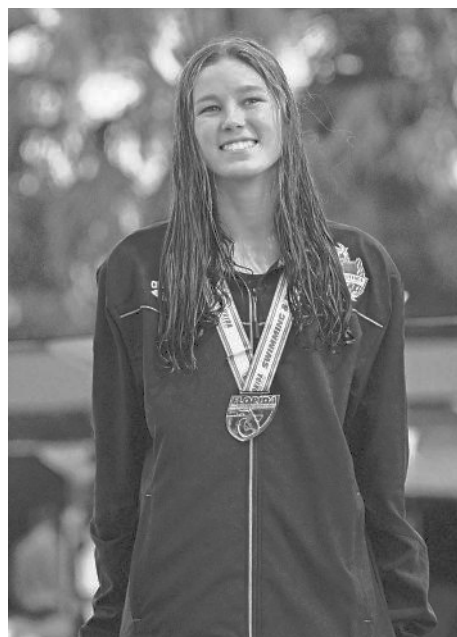
- Lyman (Class 3M; in contention with First Coast, Fletcher); at Orange City University, bye
- Wekiva (Class 3M); bye, at Apopka
- Wharton (Class 3M); vs. Tampa Freedom, vs. Hillsborough
- Pine Forest (Class 3S; in contention with Middleburg); at Pensacola Washington, bye
- Fort Walton Beach (Class 3S); vs. Choctawhatchee, at Crestview
- Lake Buena Vista (Class 2M; in contention with Episcopal, Jackson, Wolfson); at Bishop Moore, vs. Orlando Colonial

Creekside's Miller sets decision time

Circle the date: Nov. 8. That's when Creekside senior sprinter **Christian Miller** is set to announce his college choice from a quartet of high-profile track and field finalists: Florida, Florida State, Georgia and LSU.

Miller won both the 100 and 200-meter dash in FHSAA Class 4A and ran even faster in the summer, capturing both events at the USA Track & Field U-20 Outdoor National Championships in Oregon. His wind-legal 10.06 in the 100 ranks as the fourth-fastest all-time for a high school runner in USATF records and set a new U18 age record.

National track website MileSplit ranked Miller as the nation's No. 1 track



Ponte Vedra's Penny Zarczynski committed to Yale swimming. BRYAN COONEY/TCPALM

and field prospect earlier this year.

Anckner wins Menendez bowling title

Add **Eli Anckner** to a new chapter in Menendez sports history.

The Falcons' bowler won the District 3 boys bowling championship Monday, rolling a 705 to qualify from the competition in Volusia County. He qualifies for

the state finals from Oct. 31-Nov. 2 at Boardwalk Bowl Entertainment Center in Orlando.

Menendez, Palatka and St. Augustine are the only Northeast Florida schools that participate in boys bowling.

In girls bowling, meanwhile, a 396 from **Savannah Roberts** helped Palatka qualify second in District 3 behind Daytona Beach Seabreeze.

BK, Ponte Vedra win Speziale Invitational

No more evidence required: Beating Bishop Kenny and Ponte Vedra in cross country won't be very easy come playoff time.

Ponte Vedra captured the boys team championship on its home course and Bishop Kenny ran away with the girls title at Saturday's Craig Speziale Invitational, the last large meet on Northeast Florida's regular season calendar.

The Sharks' **Miles Wicks** (16:23), **Luke Ross** (16:28) and **Davis Brown** (16:35) all placed top 10 in the boys race for an 80-point finish, followed by Bartram Trail at 98 and Nease at 117.

Bishop Kenny's **Alejandro Vinas** took the boys individual championship in 15:52, 21 seconds clear of Creekside senior **Jack Zurn**.

The Bishop Kenny girls further solidified their position as a potential Class 2A champion, displaying their depth with five runners (**Tessa Massa**, **Emily Wheldon**, **Stephanie Gden**, **Alexis Wilson** and **Davis Johnson**) inside 19:15 for a 40-point finish. For Gden and Wilson, the times represent substantial personal records.

Ponte Vedra placed second at 53 points, then Gainesville Buchholz with 68.

Dashing away with yet another individual championship was Creekside sophomore **Alyson Johnson** in 18:02, an 11-second edge on Ponte Vedra's **Daisy Ross**. With a light weekend on deck, the season rolls into district races beginning Monday.

Around the area

Bartram Trail cornerback **Julian Porter** committed to Army football. ... Episcopal forward **Grady Schwartz** committed to Tampa men's basketball. ... Trinity Christian pitcher **Braden Hansen** committed to FSCJ baseball and infielder **Maddox Lee** committed to Santa Fe College baseball. ... Middleburg junior outfielder **Mika Wesley** committed to Bethune-Cookman softball and junior pitcher **Lily Bennett** committed to FSCJ softball. ... Yulee outside hitter **Emma Cook** committed to Eastern Florida State College volleyball. ... Ponte Vedra mid-fielder **Aubrey Schmidt** committed to Embry-Riddle women's lacrosse. ... Ponte Vedra junior **Penny Zarczynski** committed to Yale women's swimming. ... Eagle's View named **Mike Davis** head softball coach. ... Former Mandarin distance runner **Sem Sultanov** qualified for the U.S. Olympic Trials in the men's marathon. ... Former Mandarin midfielder **Logan Gonzales**, now at Jacksonville University, was named ASUN women's soccer goalkeeper of the week. ... Alabama recognized Mandarin graduate and double NCAA swimming champion **Kensley McMahon** during halftime of the Crimson Tide's football victory over Tennessee. ... **High School Soccer Media Day, hosted by JAXUSL, is set for 9 a.m. Nov. 2 at the Winston Family YMCA.** ... High school wrestling practice, like basketball, begins Monday across the FHSAA.

Football

Continued from Page 1C

including a pick and a long kick return, to ward off Atlantic Coast's comeback bid last week.

Bishop Kenny (5-3, 2-0) at Bolles (4-4, 2-0), District 2-2M, 7:30 p.m.

Both rivals have circled this one for a year now. Bishop Kenny stunned Bolles 14-13 last year to end a 45-year drought in the series and capture a district title. The district is on the line this time as well. The spotlight will be on the trenches, where a young Bolles line is always ready to clear the way for ball carriers Emmett Grzebin and Ty Neal. Freshman running back Caleb Mattison has emerged on a Kenny offense that's dropped two of its last three.

Thursday's games

- Baldwin (5-3) at Ribault (3-5), 6:30 p.m.
- Bishop Kenny (5-3, 2-0) at Bolles (4-4, 2-0), District 2-2M, 7:30 p.m.
- Creekside (4-4) at Atlantic Coast (4-4), 6:30 p.m.
- Episcopal (3-5, 0-2) at Wolfson (3-5, 0-2), District 2-2M, 6:30 p.m.



Bolles running back Ty Neal, center, rushes against the Bishop Kenny defense in 2022. The rivals meet for the District 2-2M championship on Thursday. CLAYTON FREEMAN/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION

- Fletcher (6-2, 2-0) at First Coast (4-4, 2-0), District 1-3M, 6:30 p.m.
- Mandarin (6-2, 1-0) at Sandalwood (0-8, 0-1), District 1-4M, 6:30 p.m.
- Parker (0-8, 0-2) at Englewood (5-3,

- 0-2), District 1-3M, 6:30 p.m.
- Raines (7-1, 1-0) at Jackson (3-5, 1-0), District 1-2M, 6:30 p.m.
- Union County (4-3) at Dixie County (6-2), 7:30 p.m.

INSIDE THE RIVALRY: LAST 10 MEETINGS

- Sept. 4, 2009: Jackson 27, Raines 0
- Sept. 3, 2010: Raines 21, Jackson 14
- Oct. 7, 2011: Raines 38, Jackson 6
- Oct. 5, 2012: Raines 33, Jackson 0
- Oct. 18, 2013: Raines 45, Jackson 0
- Oct. 18, 2014: Raines 41, Jackson 0
- Oct. 17, 2015: Raines 56, Jackson 0
- Sept. 29, 2017: Raines 78, Jackson 0
- Sept. 17, 2021: Raines 31, Jackson 14
- Oct. 28, 2022: Jackson 21, Raines 12

INSIDE THE RIVALRY: LAST 10 MEETINGS

- Nov. 15, 1996: Bolles 66, Bishop Kenny 0
- Nov. 14, 1997: Bolles 48, Bishop Kenny 10
- Nov. 13, 1998: Bolles 49, Bishop Kenny 0
- Nov. 12, 1999: Bolles 52, Bishop Kenny 8
- Nov. 10, 2000: Bolles 47, Bishop Kenny 3
- Oct. 3, 2003: Bolles 55, Bishop Kenny 0
- Oct. 1, 2004: Bolles 69, Bishop Kenny 0
- Oct. 13, 2017: Bolles 38, Bishop Kenny 34
- Oct. 12, 2018: Bolles 31, Bishop Kenny 28
- Oct. 28, 2022: Bishop Kenny 14, Bolles 13

SSAC 4A bracket

Cornerstone Charter (3-5) at Eagle's View (3-5), 7 p.m.