



Arizona Interscholastic Association
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NEWS RELEASE

FOOTBALL, OTHER FALL SPORTS PREPARE FOR ANOTHER BIG YEAR

PHOENIX, AZ (August 4, 2009) – Classes already are in session for many of Arizona's high schools, or will be soon. And that signals the start of practice for athletes in the fall sports.

There will be no shortage of action as the teams embark on what they hope will be that special season that culminates with a championship trophy presented by the Arizona Interscholastic Association.

Some football teams with early games begin practice today (Aug. 3), with most of the rest getting started next week (Aug. 10).

Three-time defending Class 5A Division II champion Peoria Centennial is preparing for an appearance in the annual Sollenberger Classic, to be played this year on Aug. 22 at the University of Nevada in Reno against McQueen High of Reno.

Defending Class 5A Division I champ Chandler Hamilton will open play at home on Aug. 27 against Phoenix St. Mary's.

Other defending champions are Scottsdale Saguaro (Class 4A Division I), Scottsdale Notre Dame Prep (4A-II), Payson (3A), St. Johns (2A) and Heber Mogollon (1A).

Because of the intense heat throughout most of the state, teams cannot over-emphasize proper hydration for both players and coaches, and most squads will work out in the early evening for the first month or so.

In addition to football, the fall sports are badminton, cross country, golf for the larger schools, soccer for the smaller schools, swimming and girls volleyball.

As the state's enrollments continue to rise, there has been another round of realignment for the new two-year scheduling block.

That should create some new rivalries and bring about some interesting races, particularly in football.

The state's 5A schools will be affected the most. Divisions I and II will be mixed again.

Hamilton remains in the Fiesta Region. It is the same in name only. The only other Fiesta returnee is neighboring Chandler.

The Fiesta will become a football powerhouse with perennial power Phoenix Brophy Prep joining the fray, along with Phoenix Desert Vista, Mesa and Mesa Red Mountain.

Some people believe that Red Mountain has the firepower to deal with Hamilton and Brophy. Playing a key role in the Red Mountain defensive scheme will be Arizona coaching legend Jesse Parker, who joins head coach Jim Jones' staff after several years at Gilbert High.

The 5A Central Region features a blended family of schools from the old Central, the Fiesta and the East Valley. Mesa Mountain View should have its annual region title contender, but it should face strong

challenges from Chandler Basha and Tempe Corona del Sol. And Dan Dunn, a coaching legend in his own right, returns to the sideline to coach Gilbert again after about 25 years.

Perennial 4A-I power Scottsdale Chaparral will face a big test as it moves up to Class 5A Division II as a member of the Desert Valley Region.

Now that Chaparral is out of the picture, Saguaro has a chance to rule 4A-I again for the fourth straight season. The top contender figures to be Tucson Canyon del Oro, which fell to Saguaro in the 2007 title game.

Notre Dame has won two 4A-II crowns in a row and now is in the East Sky Region after competing in the Black Canyon. The Black Canyon might be perhaps the top region in 4A-II now that 4A-I powers Glendale Cactus and Phoenix Paradise Valley have dropped down. Phoenix Greenway returns to the Black Canyon after reaching the 4A-II semifinals.

Class 3A remains virtually intact, with the tough East Region having a good chance to rule the roost again. Payson emerged as the state champ last season, but lost coach Josh Anderson to the college ranks. Matt Mayo now steps in to lead the Longhorns.

Class 2A has two noteworthy additions from the 1A ranks. Pima had one of the top all-around sports programs in 1A and now will compete in the 2A East with neighboring Thatcher. Tempe Prep also was becoming a well-rounded program and now will be tested when it enters the 2A Central with Camp Verde, Phoenix Northwest Christian, Phoenix Scottsdale Christian and Chandler Valley Christian.

Hamilton also is the defending 5A-I boys golf champion, while Phoenix Xavier Prep is primed for another strong campaign on the girls side, led by energetic coach and athletic director Sister Lynn Winsor.

Xavier also won titles in cross country, swimming and volleyball.

Have a Story Idea:

The AIA is looking for story ideas on member high schools, including its student-athlete, coaches and administrators. Have a story that you think should be shared with the AIA community? Email your idea to Don Ketchum at dketchum@aiaonline.org.