



Granada Hills top seed in girls' volleyball playoffs

By Erik Boal, Special to the Daily News

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Granada Hills won't get its rematch with Palisades in this year's City Section girls' volleyball playoffs.

But that doesn't make the Highlanders' bid for their first championship any less daunting.

After winning consecutive City titles in the top division, Palisades received the No. 2 seed in the reformatted 24-team Div. II playoffs, while Granada Hills was awarded the top seed in the 16-team Div. I bracket.

Under the new format - which is being used on a one-year experiment - the divisions are broken down by school enrollment rather than on-court success.

Not that Granada Hills won't get pushed, even without the defending champions to deal with.

Leading the list of challengers for the Highlanders are No. 2 San Pedro, No. 3 Birmingham of Lake Balboa and fourth-seed Carson.

"If we play consistent volleyball and execute, then we have as good a shot as anybody," Granada Hills coach Tom Harp said. "We're

cautiously optimistic. We just have to go out and perform."

The Highlanders lost to Palisades in last year's City final, but return a strong nucleus, led by juniors Amber Hawthorne, Kate Kaplan and Hanna Levanen.

"We're much more experienced, and that helps," Harp said. "And the good news is we're still very young. I start just one senior."

Birmingham has only lost to Granada Hills and San Pedro, but defeated the Pirates in the Sylmar tournament Oct. 24. The Patriots recorded a sweep Monday of Div. II top seed Venice.

East Valley League co-champion Poly of Sun Valley received the No. 5 seed, Valley Mission champ Sylmar was No. 6 and El Camino Real of Woodland Hills was seeded eighth and will play host to No. 9 Kennedy of Granada Hills.

In the Div. II draw, Taft of Woodland Hills - last year's Invitational bracket winner and the 2006 City champion - received the No. 3 seed, followed by Van Nuys, Eagle Rock and Verdugo Hills of Tujunga.

- Jacob H. Pollon contributed

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