



Advanced Search | Player Search

Sizing up the City of Palms Classic

Nation's top high school basketball tournament gets underway Friday in Fort Myers, Fla.

Tuesday, December 14, 2010
By: Jason Hickman | MaxPreps.com

Print | E-mail | Share | Add comments



The 38th annual State Farm City of Palms Classic tips Friday afternoon at Bishop Verot High School in Fort Myers, Fla. In addition to the prestigious 16-team tournament, the event will host six other powerhouse programs in a mini-bracket format to bring the grand total to 35 games over six days.

Paterson Catholic won the Classic a year ago, but there will be a new champion. The New Jersey school not only didn't make the trip to Fort Myers this season, but fell victim to economic struggle and closed its doors following the 2010-11 academic/athletic year.

Teams from three states – California, New Jersey and New York – have captured nine of the last 10 tournament crowns. The Florida entrants will be gunning to become the first Sunshine State team to win the COP since Miami did it in 1991.

Complete tournament field (Follow links for rosters, schedules and results)
[Bishop Gorman \(Las Vegas, Nev.\)](#), [Christ School \(Arden, N.C.\)](#), [Christ the King \(Middle Village, N.Y.\)](#), [Dr. Krop \(Miami, Fla.\)](#), [Dwyer \(Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.\)](#), [Fort Myers \(Fla.\)](#), [Mater Dei \(Santa Ana, Calif.\)](#), [Melrose \(Memphis, Tenn.\)](#), [Milton \(Ga.\)](#), [Norfolk Christian \(Norfolk, Va.\)](#), [North Port \(Fla.\)](#), [Orlando Christian Prep \(Orlando, Fla.\)](#), [Riverside Academy \(Reserve, La.\)](#), [St. Patrick \(Elizabeth, N.J.\)](#), [Whitney Young \(Chicago, Ill.\)](#), [Winter Park \(Fla.\)](#)

Favorites

No. 23 Milton: Re-focused after a loss to [Miller Grove \(Lithonia\)](#) earlier this month, the Eagles might be flying into Fort Myers at the perfect time. They are coming off their most impressive win of the season, a 73-35 shellacking of defending Georgia AA state champion [Greater Atlanta Christian \(Norcross\)](#). Milton has experience at the City of Palms, beating [Dunbar \(Fort Myers, Fla.\)](#), [St. Frances Academy \(Baltimore, Md.\)](#) and [Westchester \(Los Angeles, Calif.\)](#) in the 2009 event. **Opener:** Saturday against Fort Myers.



Photo by Lonnie Webb
Michael Gilchrist, St. Patrick

No. 2 St. Patrick: It may be a little bold to put the Celtics in this position considering they haven't played a game yet, but what's not to like about another holiday tournament-tested team led by the best player in the nation? Kentucky signee and top-rated senior [Michael Gilchrist](#) helped St. Patrick win the MaxPreps Holiday Classic last December and would love to add a COP championship to his impressive resume. **Opener:** Saturday against Melrose-Whitney Young winner.

Contenders

No. 7 Bishop Gorman: The Gaels won two holiday tournaments a year ago (Bishop Gorman Holiday Classic, Beach Ball Classic), so December success is a familiar feeling. Junior star [Shabazz Muhammad](#) is averaging 29 points per game through Bishop Gorman's first two contests. **Opener:** Friday against North Port.

No. 22 Winter Park: The [Austin Rivers](#) Show has come to Fort Myers each of the last two years and the future Duke Blue Devil has delivered at least one 40-point scoring effort in each appearance. Like Milton, the Wildcats have bounced back stronger after a humbling, early-season loss. **Opener:** Saturday against Riverside Academy.

Dark Horses

Christ the King: The Royals bring a guard-heavy lineup with a ton of experience to South Florida that includes standouts [Omar Calhoun](#), [T.J. Curry](#), [Isaiah Lewis](#) and [Mike Thompson](#), as well as 6-foot-8 forward [Chris Ortiz](#). **Opener:** Saturday against Christ School.

No. 20 Dr. Krop: The Lightning hammered Winter Park by 21 points earlier this season and are led by a legendary coach in Marcos "Shakey" Rodriguez and Kansas State-bound point guard [Angel Rodriguez](#) (no relation to his coach). **Opener:** Friday against Norfolk Christian.

No. 24 Mater Dei: The Monarchs would like to continue their trend of winning the tournament every other year after titles in 2006 and 2008. The storied SoCal program will be led by newcomer [Xavier Johnson](#), who exploded for 40 points in a tournament game two weeks ago. **Opener:** Saturday against Orlando Christian Prep.

Melrose: Success at the City of Palms Classic could wipe out a disappointing start to the 2010-11 season for head coach Jermaine Johnson and his Golden Wildcats. Picked No. 1 nationally by several media outlets, Melrose has already suffered two losses much to the disappointment of the MTV crew documenting the team's bid for a mythical national title. **Opener:** Friday against Whitney Young.

Long Shots

Christ School: Being listed as a long shot is almost a slap in the face for a program with a recent track record like Christ School, but getting through Christ the King and the winner of Mater Dei-Orlando Christian Prep in the first two rounds is going to be a tall order. **Opener:** Saturday against Christ the King.



Photo by Randy Sartin
Marshall Plumlee, Christ School

Dwyer: The Panthers are a talented bunch, but star senior [Jacoby Brissett](#) is just now joining the team after a deep run in the 5A football state playoffs. **Opener:** Saturday against Bishop Gorman-North Port winner.

Fort Myers: Don't sleep on the Green Wave, Florida's defending 4A state champions. Senior guard [Evin Graham](#) is averaging 22.5 points, 8.3 rebounds, 5.7 assists and 4.5 steals per game through six games this season. **Opener:** Saturday against Milton.

Norfolk Christian: Head coach Michael Allen has a big, athletic team led by North Carolina signee [James McAdoo](#), but the Ambassadors struggled a bit against top-notch competition a year ago. **Opener:** Friday against Dr. Krop.

North Port: The Bobcats' chances rest on the shoulders of [Kasey Wilson](#), a 6-7 senior headed to Central Florida. **Opener:** Friday against Bishop Gorman.

Orlando Christian Prep: Florida's defending 1A state champions will be taking the floor at Bishop Verot with a major chip on their shoulder after being blown off the court last week by Winter Park. **Opener:** Saturday against Mater Dei.

Riverside Academy: Manchild [Ricardo Gathers](#) (6-7, 240) is one of the nation's top juniors and helped Riverside capture Louisiana's 2A state title last winter as a sophomore. **Opener:** Saturday against Winter Park.

Whitney Young: With seven players on the roster 6-6 or taller, including 6-10 sophomore [Thomas Hamilton](#) and 6-9 freshman [Jahili Okafor](#), Michelle Obama's alma mater may be the most impressive-looking team in the field. **Opener:** Friday against Melrose.

Key players

Michael Gilchrist, St. Patrick: The Kentucky-bound superstar may be needed to carry the load early on for the Celtics with last year's point guard Kyrie Irving now at Duke and lots of new faces on the St. Patrick roster.

Xavier Johnson, Mater Dei: The 6-7, 190-pound junior has already proved he has the ability to step up when needed after netting 40 points, 17 rebounds and six blocked shots in a tournament victory over Anaheim Canyon earlier this month.

Shabazz Muhammad, Bishop Gorman: Don't be surprised if MaxPreps.com's No. 4 prospect in the 2012 class upstages some of the seniors in Fort Myers. He is averaging 29 points per game early on this season for the Gaels.

Austin Rivers, Winter Park: A major fan favorite in Fort Myers, bet on Rivers finding a way to please his followers once again. The future Duke Blue Devil erupted for 45 points in a win over [St. Benedict's Prep \(Newark, N.J.\)](#) last season and went for 46 against [Wheeler \(Marietta, Ga.\)](#) in the event as a sophomore.

Angel Rodriguez, Dr. Krop: The Kansas State-bound point guard combined with fellow senior [Cody Mann](#) for 40 points in a 76-55 win over Rivers and Winter Park earlier this season.

Adonis Thomas, Melrose: The Golden Wildcats could be on a redemption mission in Fort Myers after losing two games already this season. A highly-motivated Thomas could be a nightmare for opponents as the 6-6, 205-pound wing-forward can get it done from all over court.



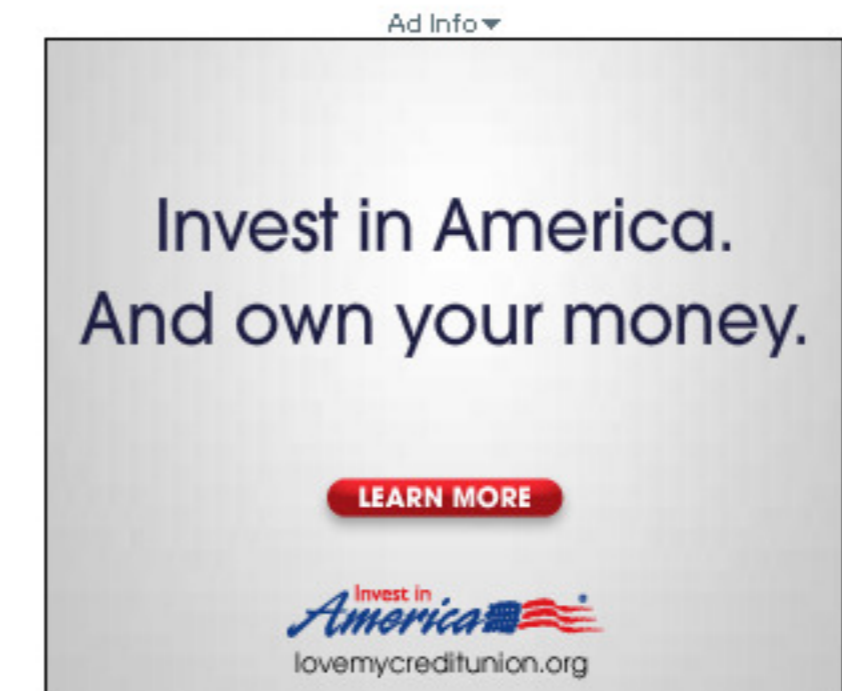
Photo by Jamie Dahl
Adonis Thomas, Melrose

Signature Series schedule

Friday, Dec. 17
5:45 p.m. – [Bishop Verot \(Fort Myers, Fla.\)](#) vs. [Thomasville \(Ga.\)](#)
Monday, Dec. 20
2:15 p.m. – [St. Mark's \(Southborough, Mass.\)](#) vs. [Academy of the New Church \(Bryn Athyn, Pa.\)](#)
6 p.m. – Urspringschule (Germany) vs. [Westchester Country Day \(High Point, N.C.\)](#)
Wednesday, Dec. 22
11:40 a.m. – TBA
4:40 p.m. – TBA

Reader Feedback | [Add Comments](#)

Please log in to add your instant feedback to this article.
[Click to Login](#) | [Click to Join](#)



Search MaxPreps:

[Find a Team](#) | [Find a Player](#) | [Videos](#) | [Photos](#)