

## HS and U19 Boys Nationals - Our Picks

Written by  
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Our picks for the Boys U19 and High School Nationals playoffs:

### **U19 Quarterfinals**

#### **Highland v. West Shore**

We love West Shore. They are a tough team with a lot of resolve. Highland is simply too athletic, too physical, and too clinical. Led by co-captains Kesni Tausinga and Joshua Faagalu Highland is not taking anything for granted this year after losing the final last year. They have been drilled hard on fitness, and will work to blow teams away early, or, as their coaches say, "take hope away."

#### **Cathedral v. Belmont Shore**

This is an outstanding matchup of two of the top teams in the country. Cathedral has dominated the Midwest, perhaps more so than Belmont Shore. Despite the fact we have Shore ranked higher, we think maybe Cathedral wins this, but it's close.

#### **Naples v. United**

Could be an interesting surprise here. United has not put all its pieces together, and that's exactly what Naples has done. Cohesion and goalkicking are key in this game (short matches, so take points whenever they are on offer ...). United is massive up front and deadly in the backs.

### **Kansas City Junior Blues v. Union**

The Blues have one of their best teams in years. But this is a bit of a pick 'em.

### **U19 Semis**

#### **Highland v. Cathedral or Belmont Shore**

Only one team has come close to Highland this season, and that's Colorado Springs. Cathedral or Shore might push the Utah team tight – Highland has won an awful lot of 14-12 and 12-10 games in its nationals history. The thing is, they win them.

### **KC Jr. Blues (or maybe Union) v. United**

It is possible United will be beaten by Naples, but that would still be a big upset. In the semis, United wins.

### **U19 Final**

#### **Highland v. United**

Same matchup as the last three years. Highland has beaten United convincingly twice this season, and perhaps were a little caught up in their own invincibility last season. The big difference, more than anything, is that last year United had Josh and Jared Whippy. This year they do not. **Highland wins.**

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### **High School Boys Quarterfinals**

#### **Xavier v. St. Thomas Aquinas**

Xavier has improved greatly from the team that lost twice to Gonzaga in the early going. They have some outstanding athletes, including an excellent backline.

#### **Fallbrook v. Charlotte Catholic**

This is a tough one. The big game that might have shown us what Charlotte Catholic could do was halted by lightning after about 15 minutes. Still, they challenged Gonzaga well in that match, and we like their chances.

#### **Jesuit of Sacramento v. Penn HS**

This is one of the most dominant Jesuit teams in recent years. Sometimes Jesuit seems to get through by the skin of their teeth. This time, not so much. They are brilliant.

#### **McQuaid v. Gonzaga**

RUGBYMag.com's editor went to college in Rochester, NY, and so has a soft spot for rugby players coming out of that fine town. But that soft spot does not extend to predicting a victory when it's not in the cards. Gonzaga is very strong, deep, and primed to win the entire tournament (maybe).

### **HS Semis**

#### **Xavier v. Charlotte Catholic**

Old habits die hard. Xavier back in the final.

#### **Jesuit v. Gonzaga**

Possible the match of the tournament; at least the 40-minute Friday games. We cannot pick a winner, and think it will be very close either way. 12-10 here, 14-10 there ... who knows?

### **HS Final**

#### **Jesuit or Gonzaga v. Xavier**

There is no way to predict who wins this. All three teams are superb. Right now, we're leaning toward the team from Sacramento, but we wouldn't put any money on it.

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