

Coach Storm's EMass Top 25

Written by Tom Hellen

February 22, 2009

Somerville MA (Games played through the end of the regular season) – Got a new thought this week on a way to measure teams and rank them...”How’d you do against the MVC?” With many great school vacation tourneys where Top 25 teams went against non-league clubs like Lowell, Andover, and Central Catholic, it gave me a consistent measuring stick for 8 of those Top 25 teams that met these 3 MVC powers over the last 2 weeks. Of course the MVC went 7 and 1 in those contests so it just validated what a power league it is again this year. Andover suffered the only MVC loss and it was on the road in Hingham against NDA. You’ll see some comments below indicating how it impacted the rankings.

This is also the time of year when I (and many of you) look at the schedules for the entire season to compare how teams did against common opponents. I use this comparison to try and figure out who might beat who and why they can beat then in the state tournament. Thus this additional scrutiny on my part caused me to reflect and make few notes on what each team’s record below is against this list of Top 25 teams. It shows you who played the tough schedules and how they performed in big games. Will a tough schedule get you better prepared for the state tournament? Will a schedule with only a few tough games hurt your chances come tourney time? Tough games also mean close games where you need to use clock management late in games to win...where you need to make free throws in the last minute to get by a team...where a coach can have significant impact on getting the most out of their team late in the game. Kind of interesting...I thought so anyways...LOL.

There was some great February tourney action last week with many high profile matchups that were fun to watch. I saw 10 games in 8 days...I am now battle ready for the state tournament...the big question is am I “cash” ready for the controversial MIAA ticket prices???...LOL. I hope to come out with a quick tourney preview of this man’s opinion of who I think will be heading to the Garden. Look for it on Monday if you are curious. Here’s hoping that every state tourney game is won by a team or player and that no kid misses that big free throw or has a turnover that costs their team a chance to move on...I hate it when that happens...no high school kid should end their career with a bad memory so let all the close games be decided with a great moment by hitting a winning shot...a big free throw...or making the great pass to someone who wins the game...let each losing team leave feeling that if they only had the ball one more time that they could have won...that the clock ran out on them and that they didn’t “lose” the game.

I want to thank Doug Lindland for his help with our website this year. Doug does great work and if you need website services, feel free to e-mail him at doug@easternhoopleague.com or check out his site at www.easternbasketball.org

Getting some consistency with the top dozen or so teams so let’s see how they all fare in the state’s. I hope you enjoy the rankings I’ve compiled and always feel to e-mail me at coachstorm5@comcast.net with any comments. May your team play hard, play well, and have nobody get hurt the rest of the way! Enjoy the games!

Top 25 Rankings

Now Last Ranking

#1.	#1.	Wellesley (D2 S) – 20 – 0 I love the way these kids play...their defense...their ball movement...their intensity... but...starting to wonder if the schedule with only 2 games vs. Top 25 teams...both wins against Walpole...will have them tournament ready?...non-league games against Belmont and Waltham were not good tests and how will they react to the inevitable close game down the stretch?...time will tell....but then again they have something few have...they went all the way last year!
#2.	#2.	Lowell (D1 N) – 18 – 2 This group is just a hoop purist delight right now with the way they are moving the ball...inside, outside, cross-court...pretty to watch. 3 great wins in 4 days over Top 25 clubs...AB and AC to win the Roche Bros. Tourney and then beating Swampscott is really impressive...went 7 and 2 against Top 25 type clubs including Pinkerton, the NH power.
#3.	#2.	Central Catholic (D1 N) – 17 – 3 They win the Comcast Tourney again beating feisty Feehan and then powerful Pentucket by 3 despite Katie Z only playing 14 minutes due to foul trouble...team seems ready to go in the states...went 4 and 3 against the Top 25 teams they faced.
#4.	#2.	Andover (D1 N) – 17 – 4 – Bopping on the road at NDA by 18 knocks them down a peg but rallied to win the St. Mary's Tourney with great wins over #10 Lynn English by 2 then #9 Westford by 14...this group will be a tough out in the tournament...went 6 and 4 against Top 25 type teams counting win over CMass power Wachusett and loss to Pinkerton.
#5.	#7.	Oliver Ames (D2 S) – 19 – 1 One point loss to B-R earlier is how close they are to being unbeaten. Winning the Walpole Tournament handily is a nice confidence builder going into the battle zone that will be D2 South this year...went 3 and 1 vs. the Top 25.
#6.	#6.	Arlington Catholic (D2 N) – 19 - 2 How'd you do against the MVC?...lost to Lowell by 3...49 to 46...club still may be the top dog in D2 North as they beat Reading in Acton by 13...I like the way they are handling most teams...both losses by 3 points...went 3 and 2 against Top 25 foes.
#7.	#8.	Swampscott (D3 N) – 18 - 2 How'd you do against the MVC?...lost to Lowell by 4...55 to 51...now it's off to the D3 North where it could come down to them and Pentucket...what else is new...went 1 and 2 against the Top 25.
#8.	#9.	Pentucket (D3 N) – 19 – 2 How'd you do against the MVC?...lost to Central Catholic by 3...51 to 48...but lost earlier however to Swampscott so they stay a spot behind the Big Blue...until hopefully they meet in the state tourney to settle who is better...that loss to the Big Blue should be a big motivator...went 2 and 2 vs. the Top 25.
#9.	#5.	Westford (D2 N1) 18 – 2 – How'd you do against the MVC? ...lost to Andover by 14...64 to 50...Talented team could be there at the end with AC in D2 North...went 3 and 1 against the Top 25.

#10.	#23.	Lynn English (D1 N) – 19 – 3 How'd you do against the MVC?...lost to Andover by 2 but had the lead with 8 seconds left...63 to 61...this group now has the confidence it can play with anyone and Coach Hogan has been on the scouting trail everywhere...if they play Central Catholic it could be a fun one to watch...went 1 and 3 against the Top 25.
#11.	#10.	Reading – (D2 N) -- 18 – 2 Great performance over Stoneham to win the Middlesex league and got ahead of AC by double digits in 1 st half in Acton but the good defense disappeared as they gave AC 43 2 nd half points...whoa...can't do that in the state's...got back in gear with solid win over AB in the consolation...4 and 2 against the Top 25.
#12.	#12.	Walpole (D2 S) -- 15 – 5 WOW...5 games in 7 days with 4 against Top 25 teams and they went 2 and 3...and get a rough draw having to travel to play Bishop Feehan (who they just beat by 4 in the Comcast) in 1 st round of the states...if they win, Rebels get a 3 rd crack at bitter rival Wellesley...they certainly will be battle tested...LOL!...went 2 and 4 vs. the Top 25 overall.
#13.	#14.	Bishop Feehan (D2 S) – 15 – 5 How'd you do against the MVC?...lost to Central Catholic by 11...68 to 57...but it was 2 points when Jenna Roncarati fouled out with 3 minutes to go so a better game than final score indicates...1 and 4 (I counted RI power Lasalle) vs. Top 25 teams.
#14.	#15.	Bridgewater-Raynham (D1 S) -- 15 - 4 Tough loss to the Archies hurt but came back with good win over D1 South rival Marshfield...hope they are 100% healthy now...went 6 and 1 vs. the Top 25...impressive.
#15.	#16.	Coyle Cassidy (D3 S) – 17 – 3 – Super season so far but a horrible 1 st round draw in the state's with the Archie's...record vs. Top 25 is 1 and 3.
#16.	#18.	Notre Dame of Hingham (D2 S) – 15 – 5 How'd you do against the MVC?...BEAT Andover by 18...68 to 50...but also lost big to hot Fontbonne and the Archies over the last 2 weeks so which NDA will show up in the state's?...hopefully it's the one that beat Andover...5 and 2 against the Top 25.
#17.	#11.	Whitman Hanson (D2 S) – 20 – 2 Good regular season but have to be disappointed losing to D2 South rival Mansfield in the Mansfield Tourney finals...not the way you want to head into the states...2 wins over solid New Bedford were the closest to Top 25 victories.
#18.	#24.	Foxborough (D2 S) – 17 – 3 – Good regular season but another club with only 2 contests against Top 25 teams (2 losses to OA) so you wonder how this will impact them in the state's???
#19.	#20.	Brockton (D1 S) – 15 – 5 Boxers won last 3 to end strong but will lack of consistency hurt in the state's?...1 and 2 vs. the Top 25.
#20.	#13.	Medfield (D2 S) – 19 – 1 Down 5 to Walpole at the half and then things go south in 2 nd half and undefeated season goes out the window...sign of good seniors (6 in the rotation) as they forget quickly and come back and smoke D-R in the consolation...seniors are strong come the states so we'll see what happens here...lost big to Walpole in only Top 25 action.
#21.	#17.	Cohasset (D4 S) -- 19 – 1 Road trip to Abington cost them unbeaten regular season but look out D4 South as this club has to be favored to win it all again...no Top 25 games.
#22.	#25.	Carver (D3 S) – 17 – 4 – Club has won 7 straight since 1 point loss to E. Bridgewater so D3 South better be ready as they could go far...if they are 100% healthy...no record against the Top 25.

#23. Cusp	Somerville (D1 N) – 15 – 5 Ended the year with 8 straight wins and have 3 wins over Top 25 clubs so the Highlanders have earned a spot here...went 3 and 5 against the Top 25 teams.
#24. Tie #19.	Marshfield (D1 S) 16 – 6 – Rough closing stretch losing 4 of last 5 to Somerville, Fontbonne, Spellman and B-R...no softies in that bunch however. D1 South is wide open so let's see how well they regroup...record is 1 and 4 against the Top 25.
#24. Tie Cusp	Melrose (D2 N) – 16 - 4 Lost 3 in the league by a total of 8 points...won last 3 to go into the tourney on an uptick...people seem to be overlooking them...that might be a mistake...1 and 3 vs. Top 25.
#25. Tie #24.	Acton Boxborough (D1 N) -- 14 – 6 How'd you do against the MVC?...lost to Lowell by 16...66 to 50...played the Roche Bros. Tourney without their 2 captains so hard to measure and hard to tell how healthy they will be in the tourney...1 and 5 against the Top 25 as I counted the CMass games against tough Holy Name.
#25. Tie #25.	Stoneham (D3 N) 17 – 3 – Bubble burst big time with 30 point blowout by Reading on the road...can they get it together for the tourney??...we'll know soon...2 and 2 in Top 25 games.
#25. Tie #21.	Bourne (D3 S) – 18 – 2 Loss to D-R by 3 hurts...another with a somewhat softer schedule that included no games against any of the Top 25 teams shown here...club has size and talent though and being the top seed in D3 South gets a pretty good draw so could be a good run for them.

“On the Cusp”

New Mission (D4 N) – 18 – 2 Winning City title over Brighton is big...loss in NYC is a Top 25 kind of game.
New Bedford (D1 S) – 15 – 5 Won last 3 so getting the needed momentum for their state tourney run...2 and 3 against the Top 25.
Cardinal Spellman (D3 S) – 13 - 7 Winning the Bridgewater Tourney may finally mean they have the consistency and confidence needed for a state tourney run. Went 3 and 2 against the Top 25 (I counted the Mercy, CT game) so strong schedule and favorable looking draw could mean a final 4 berth in D3 South.
Bishop Fenwick (D2 N) – 14 – 6 Loss to AP appears to have been a strong motivator as they have played real well since then beating Danvers and Masco pretty easy in the North Shore Tourney...0 and 2 against the Top 25.
Fontbonne (D1 S) – 13 – 7 Interesting club now (should have had them back sooner) closing out the season on a 10 and 2 run with wins over NDA, the Archies, and Marshfield...2 and 5 vs. the Top 25.
St. Mary's of Lynn (D3 N) – 16 – 6 Finished strong winning 4 in a row...0 and 3 vs. the Top 25 but could be a final 4 team in D3 North.
Masconomet (D2 N) – 15 – 5 Health of Jamie White is the key from here on out...bad ankle has slowed this super “ath-u-lete” to a crawl...0 and 3 against the Top25...
Archbishop Williams (D3 S) – 11 – 11 – Can you say “matchup problem?” Driscoll is just that...schedule was brutal and they breathe a sigh of relief to get in the tourney but everyone is 0 and 0 now...hmmm...3 and 5 vs. Top 25 including CMass Westboro.
Salem (D1 N) – 15 – 5 Won last 2 closing with 5 point win over tough Wilmington...0 and 3 vs. the Top 25 though.

Needham (D1 S) – 14 – 6 Ended the year strong and D1 South is wide open... and I like their bracket...hmmm...1 and 3 against the Top 25.
Weymouth (D1 S) – 12 – 6 Started 5 and 1 but only 7 and 5 the rest of the way...hosting hot Fontbonne could be a problem in round 1...Top 25 record was 1 and 2 as they beat NDA at Xmas.
Mansfield (D2 S) – 13 – 7 Winning their own vacation tourney is a perfect way to build momentum...but the bad news is they travel to Foxboro for round 1 and they lost to Foxboro twice this year...1 and 2 against the Top 25.
North Quincy (D1 S) – 15 - 5 Only 6 and 4 to end the season but get a home tilt vs. Newton North so could start the tourney well and went 1 and 2 against the Top 25.
Lincoln-Sudbury (D2 N) – 12 – 8 Lost 3 games by 1 point this year...but beat D1 Dartmouth who was playing very well to end the year and scored 70 points doing it so that has to be a good sign...0 and 4 vs. the Top 25.
Newton South (D1 S) 13 – 7 – Young and talented crew have long ride to Dartmouth for round 1 but the adrenaline will be high...1 and 2 vs. the Top 25.
Durfee (D1 S) 12 – 7 – Brutal ending to the season losing McDonald with a broken hand and also their last 3 games...1 and 3 in Top 25 action.
North Andover (D2 N) 14 – 6 – Solid group that should get to round 2 and probably against powerful AC...0 and 3 against Top 25 teams including Pinkerton, NH.
Sharon (D2 S) – 13 – 7 Injuries gone?...hope so as they end season with 2 wins so good momentum for the tourney but D2 South is soooo tough...0 and 2 vs. the Top 25.
Dighton Rehoboth – (D2 S) -- 15 – 5 There is one question only here...how healthy will Mary N be for the tournament as they lost big in the Walpole Tourney and she obviously was not 100%...1 and 1 vs. the Top 25.
Tewksbury (D2 N) – 13 – 7 They travel to Masco in what should be a very competitive game in round 1...both played Fenwick and they lost by 8 and Masco lost by 15 but White was not 100%...0 and 3 vs. the Top 25.
Hopkinton (D2 S) – 14 – 6 Got beat pretty good by CMass power Algonquin to end the year so not the right mindset for the tourney...0 and 3 vs. the Top 25.
Concord Carlisle (D2 N) – 14 – 6 Losing 3 of your last 4 is not the way you want to go into the state tournament but it is what it is...1 and 1 vs. the Top 25.
Manchester Essex (D4 N) 15 – 5 – Well coached team with great tourney experience from last year bodes well for their D4 North chances...0 and 1 against the Top 25.
Brighton (D2 N) – 16 – 2 Loss to New Mission ends the hot streak but it doesn't count for state purposes as it was played Friday...no Top 25 games.
Wilmington (D3 N) – 11 – 9 Wildcats end the year 2 and 5 so not exactly "hot" right now...0 and 1 against the Top 25.
Weston (D3 N) – 13 – 7 They will go as far as Becca Kimball takes them...0 and 3 against the Top 25.
Gloucester (D2 N) – 12 – 8 Team has had a yo-yo year...up and down...and the yo-yo could be on a down swing as they have to travel way out to Westford to face the powerful Grey Ghosts...0 and 3 against the Top 25.

Random Rim Ramblings...

Reading about Western Mass star **Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir** scoring her 3,000th point recently got my mind wandering back for some reason to coaching against Everett's all time great **Keri Downs**. Most of you probably never heard of her but 10 years ago this week she broke the 2,000 point barrier and ended with 2,019 career points. I'm pretty sure she did this in 4 years and did not play varsity in 7th or 8th grade like some others who are on the all-time scoring list.

Keri was only 5' 4" but was unstoppable. How unstoppable you ask? She scored over 40 points 9 times in her career including the night she got 2,000...needing 21 she scored 40 in what turned out to be her last high school game. She averaged 30.5 PPG her senior year facing double and triple teams every game as Everett that year was not strong and missed making the state tourney.

The game I always remember was her junior year when Somerville Coach Brian Harris went to scout Everett playing a very good Lexington team. Everett beat them that night and I believe the score was 70 to 64. Keri set the single game Everett scoring record in that one with 48 points. The interesting thing was that Brian had her for 10 assist also! So Keri either scored or passed for all but 2 of her team's points that night. Terrific kid too who was #2 in her class at Everett and went on to be a 2 time captain at D1 Dartmouth in the Ivy League. Sometimes we get caught up with who is so great nowadays and believe me there are many talented kids around today but when I look back at Keri...boy was she a star!

Gotta' run folks!...Remember...**“No ability without eligibility!”...and...“The ball stops bouncing for everyone at some point but a college degree lasts forever!”**