

By Aaron Williams

High school sports in 2022 felt, well, normal again. And with every state and sport back in action full bore, the year left us with some incredible moments, indelible images and unforgettable superstars.

From great programs like [St. John Bosco \(Bellflower, Calif.\)](#) football, [Montverde Academy \(Montverde, Fla.\)](#) boys basketball and [St. Mary's Prep \(Orchard Lake, Mich.\)](#) baseball to the individual accomplishments of athletes like Gary Martin, [Bergen Reilly](#) and [Ethen Knox](#), 2022 provided plenty to look back upon.

And through it all, 2022 brought historic wins, record-breaking performances, controversial moments, celebrity coaches and unforgettable players and teams. Read on for our look at the top 22 high school sports stories of 2022.

22. In memoriam — Gary Gaines/Terry English

Gaines was the subject of one of the greatest football movies of all time, "Friday Night Lights," adapted from the book of the same name. The former [Permian \(Odessa, Texas\)](#) coach died in August at age 73.

English was the 2020-21 MaxPreps National Girls Basketball Coach of the Year and Kansas legend. He led [Bishop Miege \(Shawnee Mission, Kan.\)](#) to 22 state titles and 910-168 from 1975-2021. He died in October from a stroke at age 72.

21. Roncalli blitzes to softball title

[Roncalli \(Indianapolis\)](#), Indiana's Class 4A champion, became the first team from the Hoosier State to also grab a MaxPreps National Championship after finishing 32-0 in 2022. Florida commit [Keagan Rothrock](#) led a pitching staff that tossed 20 shutouts. As a team, the Royals hit .442 for the season with 58 homers.

20. Duncanville boys, Sidwell Friends girls grab basketball titles

The paths were different [Duncanville \(Texas\)](#) and [Sidwell Friends \(Washington, D.C.\)](#), but the results were the same — MaxPreps National Championships for both the Panthers and the Quakers.

The Duncanville boys went 35-1 with a national resume and Class 6A title, including erasing a 20-point semifinal deficit to win and advance.

Sidwell, meanwhile, ran the table to finish 30-0 against top-notch national competition while also winning the inaugural State Champions Invitational.

19. Donda Academy saga

First it was closed, then open and then in limbo. Donda Academy, a Southern California prep school founded by rapper Kanye West, had started to gain traction in the basketball academy landscape. But that was before Ye, as he now goes by, spouted anti-Semitic comments that caused sponsors to abandon the rapper and basketball tournaments to drop the school from their brackets.

18. Female pitcher shines on baseball diamond

Girls play high school baseball from time to time, but few have stood out like [Jillian Albayati](#) of [Anaheim \(Calif.\)](#). The junior helped her team to the California Southern Section Division 6 postseason, taking an 11-0 record on the mound and 1.68 ERA into the playoffs.

17. Jenks snaps nation's longest win streak

[Jenks](#) and [Bixby](#) have battled for Oklahoma supremacy over the decades. Bixby came into its November showdown with Jenks riding a 58-game win streak stretching back to 2018. That ended, however, as Jenks got an 80-yard TD run from [Jaiden Carroll](#) to jump start the third quarter before handing the Spartans a 38-35 loss.

16. Steve Smith retires

In 37 seasons at [Oak Hill Academy \(Mouth of Wilson, Va.\)](#), Smith had won eight national titles, seen 35 NBA players come through the program and compiled a 1,232-97 record. Some of the names to play for Smith include Carmelo Anthony, Rajon Rondo, Kevin Durant and Naismith Player of the Year winners Ron Mercer and Brandon Jennings.

15. Cathedral Catholic goes unbeaten, wins volleyball MaxPreps National Championship

[Cathedral Catholic \(San Diego\)](#) was flat out unstoppable. The Dons went 42-0 with a Durango Fall Classic title along with a CIF Open Division crown. Player of the Year [Julia Blyashov](#) led a group that included MaxPreps All-Americans [Noemie Glover](#) and [Maya Evens](#).

14. Gary Martin runs sub-4 mile

The [Archbishop Wood \(Warminster, Pa.\)](#) runner became the 14th high schooler in history to shatter the 4-minute mile in May, clocking a 3:57.98 at the Philadelphia Catholic League championships. Martin, who owns 14 PIAA titles, ran splits of 59.67 seconds, 58.79, 59.87 and the final lap in 59.62.

13. St. Mary's Prep caps legendary season

[St. Mary's Prep \(Orchard Lake, Mich.\)](#) didn't just go undefeated and earn the MaxPreps National Championship in baseball. They went wire-to-wire as the No. 1 team, finishing 44-0 to extend their 66-game win streak. Their 44 victories ranks as the best record for a national championship team.

12. O'Gorman volleyball player joins U.S. National team

[Bergen Reilly](#), a MaxPreps All-American was pressed into service in September for the U.S. National volleyball team in a Pan Am Final Six match. Reilly, an [O'Gorman \(Sioux Falls, S.D.\)](#)

standout headed to Nebraska, was the first high school player to play on the Olympic level squad in a generation.

11. Black Eyed Peas perform halftime concert

The hip hop group that once played the Super Bowl XLV halftime show in 2011 wowed a high school football crowd of 30,000 at the 87th annual East L.A. Classic between [Roosevelt \(Los Angeles\)](#) and [Garfield \(Los Angeles\)](#). Growing up near the schools, Black Eyed Peas leader will.i.am wanted to give back to the neighborhood that helped raise him. The group trotted out a list of hits that included "I Gotta Feeling," "Let's Get It Started" and "Boom Boom Pow."**10.**

Basketball star power — Boozer Brothers, Bronny and Juju

MaxPreps has been introducing the world to star athletes long before they made careers in the NBA, NFL and MLB. Star power in basketball is again shining bright as sophomores [Cameron](#) and [Cayden Boozer](#) have emerged for [Columbus \(Miami\)](#). The sons of former NBA standout Carlos Boozer are among the game's rising talents. And while the Boozer brothers still have two years to shine, [Bronny James](#) and [Juju Watkins](#), both playing at [Sierra Canyon \(Chatsworth, Calif.\)](#), are bona fide stars. James, son of LeBron James, is having a dynamite senior season while Watkins is bound for USC and looking to take the girls team to a repeat California state title.

9. Young guns shine on football field

It's always impressive when an underclassman makes a splash for a varsity football team. This season saw these three land starring roles.

[Brady Smigiel](#) of [Newbury Park \(Calif.\)](#) set freshman passing marks while throwing for more than 3,200 yards and 43 touchdowns. [Julian Lewis](#), the [Carrollton \(Ga.\)](#) signal-caller, led the Trojans to the Georgia AAAAAA finals while throwing for 4,118 yards and 48 TDs.

And while the freshman duo was outstanding, what [Trent Seaborn](#) did as an eighth grader might take the cake, leading [Thompson \(Alabaster, Ala.\)](#) to its fourth straight Alabama title. He showed poise beyond his years, throwing for five touchdowns in the Warriors' 49-24 victory

8. IMG drops 96 in a half

Each year it seems there are a handful of eye-popping football scores that look more at home on a basketball scoreboard than the gridiron. One of those was perennial national power [IMG Academy \(Bradenton, Fla.\)](#), which put up 96 points on West Toronto Prep ... in the first half. The game was called at the break.

7. Viral plays of the year — Five-lateral victory and 'Is it a TD?'

One of the best things about high school sports ... and sports in general ... is that you never know what you're going to see on any given night. That was the case throughout the year. But two viral plays standout above the fray.

The first was [North Cobb Christian \(Kennesaw, Ga.\)](#) using five laterals on the game's final play to down Wesleyan 19-15 in an August game in Georgia. [You can see it here.](#)

The second involved No. 3 [Central \(Miami\)](#) in its season-opening 20-14 upset win over No. 5 IMG Academy. The Rockets got the game-winning points off a pick-6 by [Lawayne McCoy](#), who appears to have celebrated early and flipped the ball from his hands before reaching the end zone. Nonetheless, the TD stood, as did the Miami Central stunner.

6. St. John Bosco wins second national title, fourth state crown

[St. John Bosco \(Bellflower, Calif.\)](#) ended where it started — as the No. 1 team in the MaxPreps Top 25 high school football rankings. Jason Negro has built a national power in Southern California as Bosco has won four CIF titles and two MaxPreps National Championships since taking over 13 seasons ago. He's 139-26 and Bosco has finished in the top 10 seven straight years and in the MaxPreps Top 25 for nine consecutive seasons.

5. Ethen Knox runs wild

Being mentioned in the same sentence as Tennessee Titans running back Derrick Henry has to mean you're doing something special. And that's just what Knox did this year. The [Oil City \(Pa.\)](#) running back ran for 3,705 yards on 385 carries as the Oilers went 7-3. His total was the most in a 10-game season and his seven 400-yard games broke Henry's mark of four.

4. Duncanville boys/girls basketball team face bans

On the eve of the 2022-23 basketball season, the high school sports governing body in Texas sanctioned both the boys and girls hoops squads at Duncanville with postseason bans and coach suspensions. The boys team was forced to vacate its 2021-22 title and coach David Peavy was suspended one season after the UIL ruled the Panthers played with an ineligible player, Anthony Black. Additionally, the boys team agreed to the postseason ban. The girls team was banned from postseason and coach Leanne Howard was suspended one season for what the UIL said were recruiting and "school practice and game restriction" violations.

3. Top-rated Arch Manning eclipses school records held by Peyton, Eli

The nephew of Super Bowl winners Peyton and Eli Manning, [Arch Manning](#) has been in the spotlight for all four years of his high school career. The top-rated player in the Class of 2023 by 247Sports is headed to Texas next season, but before he left [Newman \(New Orleans\)](#) he made sure to stamp his name in the school's record book and in the Manning family pecking order. Arch broke the yardage mark and total touchdown mark of both Peyton and Eli as the Greenies made the Louisiana Division III quarterfinals.

2. Montverde Academy continues its dominance

Kevin Boyle was already a high school basketball coaching legend before he arrived at [Montverde Academy \(Montverde, Fla.\)](#) in 2011. He won five New Jersey state titles before heading south and turning Montverde into a national powerhouse. The Eagles won their sixth national championship in his tenure after going 24-1 and winning the GEICO Nationals.

1. Bruce Rollinson announces retirement

After winning the 2021 MaxPreps National Championship, [Mater Dei \(Santa Ana, Calif.\)](#) looked poised to repeat, especially after its 17-7 Trinity League win over St. John Bosco. But early in November Rollinson suddenly and unexpectedly announced his retirement at the end of the season after 34 years at the helm of the Mater Dei program.

The Monarchs would lose the St. John Bosco rematch in the Southern Section Division 1 final, ending a career that started with Rollo playing at Mater Dei 50 years ago. But his final two seasons were dogged by controversy after a hazing scandal hit the program as some speculated it led to his retirement announcement.

Rollison ended his career with more than 340 wins, three CIF titles and two national titles.