



MENDOCINO-LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

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EAGLES EARN NO. 7 PLAYOFF SEED

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It's official. The Mendocino College Eagles' men's basketball team has been selected to play in the CCCAA 2020 Northern California Men's Basketball Regional Playoffs.

On Monday, February 24, the CCCAA playoff selection committee announced the men's community college basketball teams that would participate in the 2020 playoffs. Among selections for the 19-team Northern California playoff brackets, the Eagles were awarded a No. 7 selection, the highest such ranking in the program's history.

As such, the Eagles, will host the program's first playoff home game in its history, playing No. 10 seed Foothill College Owls of the Coast-North Conference on Friday, February 28 at 7 p.m.

The Eagles finished their regular season with a 20-8 overall record, 11-5 in Bay Valley Conference play, good for a second-place finish behind Yuba College, 14-2 and 23-5. Yuba received a No. 4 seeding in the playoffs.

Foothill finished regular season play with 17-11 overall record and third-place finish with 8-6 record in the elite Coast-North Conference final standings behind perennial state championship contender City College of San Francisco (28-0, 14-0) who received the No. 1 seed, second-place Las Positas, a No. 13 seed.

In what may be another historical first, 4 Bay Valley Conference teams made the playoffs this season. In addition to Mendocino and Yuba, Los Medanos, who finished tied with the Eagles for second place in the conference standings, received a No. 17 seed. Alameda, who finished fourth in the BVC standings with a 10-6 conference record, but went 8-0 to close out regular season play, received a No. 14 seed.

In the first round of the playoffs on Wednesday, in "play-in games", No. 17 Los Medanos was scheduled to play at No. 16 San Joaquin Delta. No. 19 San Mateo was at No. 14 Alameda. No. 18 Diablo Valley played No. 15 Chabot.

The winners of those three games would then face, No. 1, San Francisco, No. 3 Columbia and No. 2 seeds Fresno City College.

In any given season, community college basketball conferences vary in overall strength, some conferences having stronger teams collectively than others.



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Part of the playoff section criteria used by the selection committee to select a team to participate in the playoffs factors in a team's season and conference record, but also consideration is given to the coaches' poll and the team's RPI ranking. The RPI (Rating Percentage Index) ranks teams based upon a team's wins and losses and its strength of schedule in non-conference games, the latter being especially important.

This season, in addition to having a strong 20-8 overall record and 11-5 conference record, the Eagles also did well in the final CCCMBCA (California Community College Men's Basketball Coaches Association) poll and the RPI rankings.

Out of the **top 30** teams ranked in the **State**, the Eagles earned a **No. 14** ranking. Among Northern California Community Colleges, the Eagles were ranked **No. 7**, behind No. 1 San Francisco, No. 4 Fresno City, No. 6 Columbia, No. 8 Yuba, No. 10 Santa Rosa and No. 12 Sequoias.

Records going back into the 20th century are a bit sketchy, but it is probable that these rankings are the program's highest State and Northern California rankings in the program's history.

The "clincher" may well have been the Eagles' final RPI ranking. In a ranking among all 100 men's community college teams in the state, the Eagles ranked **20th** with a .573 RPI and 8th among Northern California teams.

Although already guaranteed a winning season heading into the final two weeks of the regular season and conference play, the Eagles hit a "bump in the road" late January and early February that could have derailed any playoff hopes.

A loss to Alameda at home on January 29 and then at Napa Valley on February 5, left the Eagles with a 6-5 conference record and a 15-8 overall record.

Any playoff hopes effectively required the Eagles to "win out" the final 5 games on their schedule, that included games at first-place Yuba and at home vs. second-place Los Medanos; a daunting task to say the least.

But the Eagles proved up to the challenge. They proceeded to close out their regular season on a 5-game winning streak.

After beating Contra Costa handily at home on February 7, 79-62, they got a big 66-62 win at Yuba on February 12, an 80-74 win over Los Medanos at home 2 days later and finished their regular season with a 94-85 win at home over Solano on February 19 and then at road win at Merritt on the last Friday, February 21, 67-48.

That hot finish propelled them to the 20-8 regular-season record and a final 11-5 conference record and a No. 7 seed in the 2020 Northern California Men's Basketball Regional Playoffs.

As might be expected, Eagles head coach Billy Offill was quite pleased with his team making the playoffs, especially with a No. 7 ranking.

Upon his team's selection, he received a congratulatory phone call from former legendary MC men's basketball



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head coach and Hall of Famer Ed Boyle who coached the Eagles for many years prior to Offill's now 11-year tenure. In the call Boyle informed Offill that the 7th ranking in the playoffs was the highest in the program's history.

The last time the Eagles made the playoffs was in the 2011-2012 season when they had to play a "play-in game."

Getting the high seeding and the home game that comes with it was especially pleasing to Offill. "For us to not have to travel in the first round and play the No. 10 seed in the north is big.

"Our body of work this season is really solid. I'm happy for our guys. This game is a good matchup. It's going to be a good game. We match up well with Foothill. They are solid team.

"They play great defense. They are a 64-65 point-a-game type of team. They play slow paced and really chops you up. We're a team that likes to get up and down the court. So it's a contrast in styles.

"They are very well coached and are a very good team. They play in same league as San Francisco City. They blew out Santa Rosa. They have some quality wins. I know their coach pretty well. Coach Stanley does a heck of a job. I've coached against him. I know his system. They'll be doing the same getting ready for us.

"We got our bracket on Monday, so we have 4 days to practice. On Monday, our guys were super excited with our getting the program's highest seed ever and getting the home game. We're expecting a good crowd.

"To have 20 wins, a 7th seed in the playoffs, a 14th ranking in the state out of 100 teams says a lot about this group.

"I get a feeling and a sense from our guys that we're not done. They want to keep playing. They've hit their stride, winning 5 in a row going into the playoffs, including a win on the road at Yuba, on the road at Merritt in tough environments, beating tough LMC team after trailing early and often.

"We're going to fight Friday night. We're excited about the matchup.

"I can't say enough about these guys. We faced some adversity at times, falling off and losing three in a row in conference. We thought we might be done. The pressure was on us. So to regain our chemistry and climb back up to where we're at is exciting. We realized we controlled our own destiny."

Offill gave a nod to the other teams in the BVC, especially the other three teams that also made the playoffs.

"I think our respect (the conference's) was better this season because we got 4 teams into the playoffs. I think our league is going to continue to get better."

Evaluating his team's chances in the playoffs, Offill is optimistic. "You only need (to win) two games to go to State (playoffs). Trying to get this first one Friday night is the big key for us. We'll approach the next matchup as we get there. But we know we're in for it (a battle) on Friday.

"It will be a tough game. Foothill is a really good team, a high-quality program. They play in the No. 1 league in



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the North. They have to play City College, Los Positas, Skyline and Chabot in their league. It's the No. 1 league strength of schedule wise. They're not going to be intimidated. They're going to come here to beat us.

“But I think our conference was a good as its ever been this year. And we played some teams in the pre-season like Fresno, Sequoias and Redwoods, teams that are league champs and have won 20-plus games.

“So I think both teams are going to respect each other in this game.

“I'm really happy for our guys and for my family. I like to be home this week and not jump back in the vans. So we're really excited for our first playoff game.

“We have time to prepare for this game. We'll be able to open our doors Friday night to our community and our crowd that's done a great job supporting this team all year. It's exciting and historical

“We want to be sure to show up and play a great game Friday night, give ourselves a chance to win at the end, which we've done all year.

“You win that first game and then you only have to win one more game to reach the Final Eight.

“Again, I'm really proud of my guys, playing their way into being a Top-10 team in the north. It's impressive. I'm happy for my kids. “

The CCCAA Nor-Cal men's basketball playoff game is this Friday evening, February 28, at Mendocino College, 7 p.m.; the No. 7 Mendocino Eagles vs. the No. 10 Foothill College Owls.

The winner advances to Round 3 of the playoffs on Saturday, March 7, the Final Eight.