



2015 – 2016 CVHS GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM

PROFILE

Led by a veteran coaching staff, a core group of players ready to take the next step after a 24-win season the previous year, and one of the best transfers in the great history of transfers, the 2015-16 Castro Valley High girls basketball team reached unprecedented heights.

Nina Bessolo was able to transfer from Valley Christian to Castro Valley, even though she lived in Hayward, because her mother, Nicole, has been hired by Creekside Middle School to teach English and Social Studies. An established small-school superstar and a member of the powerhouse Cal Stars AAU program of Moraga, Bessolo proved a welcomed addition to the already strong Trojan squad.

It was clear very early on that this Castro Valley team, which had improved from five wins to 17 to 24 the previous three seasons, was something special. Led by Bessolo, junior Giana Wright and sophomore Bailey Jones, the Trojans opened the season by sweeping three teams from the rival East Bay Athletic League – California, San Ramon Valley and Monte Vista – by a total of 41 points.

A 10-0 run through the West Alameda County Conference followed, then a four-game sweep of the North Coast Section playoffs, capped by a remarkable performance by Bessolo (16 points, 16 rebounds, seven blocks) against Heritage of Brentwood that produced Castro Valley's first-ever girls basketball section title.

Three wins from a shot at the single-game state championship, the Trojans then beat Berkeley and Oak Ridge of El Dorado Hills, setting up a showdown with St. Francis of Sacramento for the Northern California title. Castro Valley led St. Francis, 30-18, at halftime before running out of gas.

"We had a couple of starters who were sick," noted assistant coach Jack Kennedy. "And playing on that kind of stage ... Had we been healthy, I think the outcome might have been different."

Kennedy and Bessolo agreed it was head coach Jim Lemmon, who has since died of cancer, who made the fairy-tale run possible.

"Jim had the patience of a saint," said Kennedy, a highly successful coach at Moreau Catholic before joining the 2015-16 Trojans. "He was a good motivator. And he was good with x's and o's."

"I knew (coming in that) our team was good," Bessolo said. "More than anything, I was confident in our coach. Credit to Coach Jim. He was an amazing coach and an amazing person."



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Lemmon had a lot of talent to work with. All-important depth was provided by Ziyah Starks, Jaime Massey, Mica Suarez, Sarah Nosseir, Kassady and Kelsey Marasigan, Vivian Woo, Payton Stanberry, Calista Burnama, Trinity Copeland and Bianca Greer.