

Ellinghouse heading for Sierra Canyon High

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After winning two consecutive Southern Section softball titles at Chaminade High of West Hills, coach Jon Ellinghouse will be elsewhere in his quest for a third.

Also among Chaminade's top football assistants, Ellinghouse, 28, has resigned to take the head football and softball job at Sierra Canyon of Chatsworth, a second-year school that administrators hope will become the area's next small-school sports power, just like Oaks Christian of Westlake Village.

"It was a gut-wrenching decision to leave, very emotional for me, but I want to make my own legacy by building from the ground up," Ellinghouse said. "This is just a great opportunity. Sierra Canyon is going to be a big-time sports program. There's definitely a vision, and I'm glad to be part of it."

Without seniors, Sierra Canyon finished 4-5 in its first eight-man football season last fall, then went 8-6 in boys' basketball, 17-8 in girls' basketball and 8-9 in baseball. A new football field and basketball gymnasium are scheduled to be constructed soon.

"The athletic facilities will be top-notch," Ellinghouse said. "Right now, the place is like a gold mine, and there is a very serious commitment to academics and athletics. It's a work in progress, and it's going to be a challenge, but I'm ready to roll up my sleeves. This is a job I truly wanted."

Two months ago, Ellinghouse was among about 40 hopefuls who applied for Chaminade's head football job in place of Ben McEnroe, now at Cal Lutheran.

Ellinghouse finished second behind Anthony Harris, who arrived from Campbell Hall of North Hollywood.

"It's kind of been like a roller coaster for me - the disappointment of being the runner-up for that job, then winning another softball championship, then resigning to come to Sierra Canyon," Ellinghouse said.

The plan is for Sierra Canyon to continue as an eight-man football program for another season, then graduate to 11-man in 2008-09.

Ellinghouse, who played football at Calabasas before graduating from Cal State Northridge, was at Chaminade for four years, the last as the football team's offensive coordinator in 2006. Previously, he was a Calabasas football assistant.

Four of the eight football teams participating Friday in the fifth annual Nike 7-on-7 Passing Championships at Veterans Stadium in Long Beach are from the area: Hart of Newhall, Birmingham of Lake Balboa, Crespi of Encino and Notre Dame of Sherman Oaks. The others are Edison of Huntington Beach, Long Beach Poly, Mater Dei of Santa Ana and Mission Viejo.

The Nike fest is considered the Southland's most prestigious and challenging passing tournament.

In other passing tournament news, Alemany of Mission Hills won its second large-scale event, defeating Agoura 20-16 on Saturday in the Conejo Valley championship. The Warriors also won the 30-team Saugus tournament last month.

Three L.A. Valley College baseball players have accepted scholarships at Div. II power Chico State: Jordan Brandt (El Camino Real of Woodland Hills), Garrett Shimamoto (Cleveland of Reseda) and Ivan Gonzalez (Sylmar).

More recruiting news: Former Taft of Woodland Hills basketball player Oscar Bellfield, a returning senior at Westchester, has scholarship offers from Arizona State, Cal, Colorado, UNLV and Utah.

Also, football offers continue to come in for Notre Dame running back Thaddeus Brown. Among those who have offered are Illinois State, UNLV and Utah State.

Former Canyon football coach Harry Welch, who resigned after winning two consecutive division championships to take a job at small-school power St. Margaret's of San Juan Capistrano, is recovering from vocal-cord surgery.

In terms of motivating his players, perhaps the fiery 62-year-old won't be as loud as he used to be.

"That's true - I guess I'm going to have to change that," Welch said.

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