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Tri-Valley Classic is a must-see

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If the Tri-Valley is a hotbed for talent in any sport, it's girls soccer. Year after year, the area produces some of the best girls soccer teams and players in the country, making the Tri-Valley Classic, which starts Thursday, a can't miss event for soccer fans.

As big of a tournament the North Coast Section playoffs are every year, it's not nearly as competitive as the Tri-Valley Classic, which not only features this area's top teams but draws some national powers, as well.

The event, which is billed as "Where the best high schools come to play" on its Web site, is hosted by Las Lomas, Monte Vista and San Ramon Valley.

"It's probably one of the two most competitive tournaments in the state," said tournament director Tim Pennington, a Las Lomas parent volunteer. "Last year, we had four teams who were ranked in the top 12 in the nation."

This year, 47 teams will invade Danville for the tournament that will be held at the Mustang Soccer Complex, Mustang Tri-Valley Field and Sycamore Valley Park. A who's who of East Bay powers will be in the mix along with Archbishop Mitty-San Jose, Iolani-Hawaii, Torrey Pines-San Diego and many more.

"Nolan Catholic from Texas (which came last year) and St. Thomas Aquinas from Florida were supposed to come, as well, but the travel just got to be too

expensive," Pennington said. "It's just not a good year for teams without a lot of money in their budget to travel."

About 10 parent volunteers began planning early in this calendar year, inviting teams, getting the Web site running and putting in countless hours to make sure it's another successful event. About two months ago another five or so joined those 10 and have been volunteering their time, as well.

"It's a lot easier for a club to put on a tournament because they can have as many as 10 to 20 teams full of parents who will help," Pennington said. "We've managed to do it with volunteers from just three teams. It will take a lot of help from all three teams once the games get started to staff the three facilities. In all, it takes about 150 volunteer hours at each site to run the tournament."

It should be a great event, and the Buzzer is excited to see which local teams emerge as the favorites for the rest of the season.

DLS GETS SNUBBED: When De La Salle and Long Beach Poly took care of business this past weekend, winning their respective section titles, just about every high school football fan in the state started getting ready for DLS vs. Poly Part III. The Spartans, which haven't lost to a Northern California team since 1991, and the Jackrabbits are definitely the best teams from their ends of the state.

But then the California Interscholastic Federation had to get in the way and prevent that game from happening. Citing Grant-Sacramento's superior strength of schedule — not its undefeated record — the CIF will be sending the Pacers to the CIF Open Division game and the Spartans to the Division I game.

The Buzzer was shocked. It's the first obvious

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miscue the CIF has made since introducing the bowl games in 2006 and one that could easily have been avoided. Grant is a deserving team, but it deserved to play for the Division I title — until De La Salle loses to a Northern California team, it should remain king.

AMADOR/FOOTHILL ALUMNI GAME: On Dec. 28, alumni from Amador Valley and Foothill will get together for a pair of soccer games in an event that will benefit a scholarship for students from both schools who have aspirations of playing collegiate soccer.

The event is not just for those who played soccer in high school, but for any alumni wanting to play a game of soccer. The women's game will begin at 2 p. m., followed by the men's game at 4:30. Both games will be held at Amador Valley.

At the Buzzer is a weekly column by Kyle Bonagura. Contact the Buzzer at kbonagura@bayareanewsgroup.com. Visit the Prep Corner Blog at www.ibabuzz.com/prepcorner

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