



# SANTA MARGARITA CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

## FALL 2021 VARSITY FOOTBALL GAME NOTES

### 2 State Champions

1997 Division II  
2011 Division I

### 3 CIF-Southern Section Champions

1996 Division V  
1997 Division V  
2011 PAC-5

### 24 CIF-Southern Section Playoff Appearances

1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997,  
1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005,  
2006, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017 &  
2019

### 4 League Champions

1996, 1997, 2000 & 2001

### 32-Plus Varsity Seasons

Overall Record: 230-135-3 (.629)  
Home: 125-61-3 (.669)  
Road: 105-74-0 (.587)

### 7 Nationally Ranked Teams

1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2011, 2012 & 2017



## St. Augustine (0-2) at Santa Margarita Catholic Eagles (1-1)

Saddleback College Stadium (Mission Viejo, California)  
Friday, September 3, 2021 • 7:00 p.m.



## LAST GAME RECAP & HIGHLIGHTS VS. NORCO

The schedule got more difficult for the Eagles as they headed east on the 91 Freeway to the Inland Empire on Thursday for a date at Norco. The Cougars came into the contest 0-5 versus Trinity League schools in recent seasons. That list included Servite, Orange Lutheran and St. John Bosco. After two quarters of play, it looked like SMC would keep that streak in tact, as they led 16-13. But Norco's luck would change after intermission as they came out of the locker room charged-up. The Panthers gained momentum as they put together a solid mix of running and passing drives en route to a 40-22 win. Defensively, Norco would stymie the Eagles with solid line play, holding them to just 11 yards rushing in the second half.

SMCs quarterback Jaxon Potter did pass for 247 yards on 19-of-39 attempts (48.7%) and two touchdowns. He found Niko Lopez in the end zone for the second-consecutive game. Sophomore Kyle Brody caught his first-career touchdown pass, as well. Nick Gallegos led the team in receiving yards with 94. Defensively, Donovan Comestro and Benjamin Durham led the club with 12 total tackles each. Defensive tackle Hero Kanu had three quarterback hurries and two tackles-for-loss. On special teams, two kickers combined to connect for three field goals. Jonathan Connor Teasley hit from 41 and 33 yards out, while Blake Wilson was successful from 46 yards.

## HEAD COACH ANTHONY ROUZIER

Anthony Rouzier begins his second season as the Head Varsity Coach at Santa Margarita Catholic High School. Prior to taking the reigns of the program in the spring of 2021, Rouzier coached at SMC for three seasons, first serving as the linebacker coach and then as the Eagles' defensive coordinator. The path to Head Coach started on August 27, 2020 when Rouzier was named on an interim basis. He replaced Tim Walsh after his resignation from the position to focus on a medical issue. On February 5, 2021, Rouzier was named fulltime Head Coach by school President Andy Sulick.

Rouzier played collegiately at the University of Connecticut in 2005. There he was the first true freshman walk-on to start in the Division-era of the school. He then transferred to the University of Massachusetts as a scholarship athlete and was a member of two Colonial Athletic Conference championships teams. In the classroom, Rouzier earned All-Academic All-Conference honors in 2007 and 2008.

After his collegiate playing days, in 2014, Rouzier coached at Amherst Regional High School (Massachusetts) where he started as the linebacker coach and was promoted to Defensive Coordinator mid-season. Rouzier then proceeded to coach the outside linebackers at Winston-Salem State University (North Carolina) in the spring of 2015. Shortly after that, he returned as a graduate assistant at his Alma Mater, the University of Massachusetts. There he worked with the defensive backs in 2015 and linebackers in 2016.

Rouzier then found his way to Europe to coach with the Hamburg Huskies of the German Football League. There, in 2017, he was the interim Head Coach and Defensive Coordinator. For his success, Rouzier was promoted to and

accepted the Head Coaching position. Rouzier was also the Defensive Coordinator for the Under-17 Hamburg State All-Star team and worked with a recruiting service that helped European prospects earn Division 1 college scholarships in the United States. One of the other German coaches was current SMC assistant coach Sean Embree. It was Embree who convinced Rouzier that coaching at SMC would be worth his while and he soon found his way to South Orange County.

Born and raised in Massachusetts, Rouzier married his wife Elwira, who he met in Germany in 2018. He holds Juris Doctor and Master's of Business Administration degrees from Florida International University and a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism from the University of Massachusetts. He is the co-creator of a children's book and non-profit organization that promotes health and wellness.

## SANTA MARGARITA PLAYERS TO WATCH

### 0 / 6 **Nicholas "Niko" Lopez | Tight End | Junior | 6-4 / 210**

- Tallied a team-high six receptions and scored one touchdown in loss @ Norco
- Recognized by PrepRedzone.com as one of the Top Receiving Performances for Week 0
- Achieved new career-highs in pass receptions (9) and yards receiving (96) in season-opening win versus San Juan Hills
- Ranked the No. 178 overall prospect in the state by PrepRedzone.com for Class of 2023
- Ranked No. 63 by *Orange County Register* of Hot-150 Top Impact Players for Fall 2021
- *Los Angeles Times* Potential Breakout Star in the Southland for Fall 2021
- A significant contributor in the Eagles' championship run at the 7-on-7 "Battle at the Beach" Passing Tournament competition at Edison (Huntington Beach) in July. Named event Most Valuable Player by PrepRedzone.com
- Spring 2021 All-Trinity League Second-Team - Offense
- Had 14 receptions for 164 yards (11.7 average) and two touchdowns in Spring 2021 season
- Called-up to varsity for the CIF-Southern Section Division 2 playoff game at Sierra Canyon in 2019 and had one catch for 11 yards
- A member of the Eagles basketball program who is described as having sound basketball instincts that transfer to the football field, especially when going after and securing the ball

### 5 **Jaxon Potter | Quarterback | Junior | 6-3 / 170**

- Recognized by PrepRedzone.com as one of the Top Passing Performances for Week 0
- Threw for the second-most passing yards ever by an SMC quarterback in debut game in season-opening win versus San Juan Hills -- 294-yards. Connected for three touchdown passes

Most Passing Yards in First Career Game at SMCHS - All-Time				
Quarterback	Yards	Opponent	Date	Class
Peter Costelli	325	Downey	08/16/18	Sophomore
<b>Jaxon Potter</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>San Juan Hills</b>	<b>08/20/21</b>	<b>Junior (Transfer)</b>
K.J. Costello	243	@ Bishop Amat	08/30/13	Sophomore
Josiah Norwood	243	@ Downey	08/25/17	Senior (Transfer)
Ryan World	222	@ Mater Dei	10/19/07	Junior

- Ranked the No. 82 overall prospect in the state by PrepRedzone.com for Class of 2023
- Cal-Hi Sports Fall 2021 Preseason All-State Second-Team - Offense (QB)
- Ranked No. 22 by *Orange County Register* of Hot-150 Top Impact Players for Fall 2021
- Ranked No. 5 quarterback in Orange County for Fall 2021 by the *Orange County Register*
- Cal-Hi Sports 2021 Preseason Hot 100 - No. 71 in state for Class of 2023
- Demonstrated poise and confidence in helping lead the Eagles to the championship of the 7-on-7 "Battle at the Beach" Passing Tournament at Edison (Huntington Beach) in July
- Transfer from JSerra Catholic (San Juan Capistrano) where he saw action at quarterback during his freshman and sophomore years on varsity

### 6 **Syncere Brackett | Linebacker | Sophomore | 6-3 / 230**

- Cal-Hi Sports Fall 2021 Preseason All-State Second-Team - Offense (LB)
- Ranked No. 48 overall prospect in the state by PrepRedzone.com for Class of 2024
- Saw significant game action as a freshman during the Spring 2021 season when he registered 11 total tackles

### 7 **Nick Gallegos | Wide Receiver / Defensive Back | Senior | 5-11 / 175**

- Led team with 94 yards receiving in loss @ Norco
- Named to OCVarsity.com Orange County “Bonus List of Top Contenders & Overlooked Players”
- Hauled-in 6 receptions for 106 yards (17.7 average) in season opening win against San Juan Hills. Also scored one touchdown. This included his longest reception -- 52-yards
- Recognized as an outstanding player at the 7-on-7 “Battle at the Beach” Passing Tournament at Edison (Huntington Beach) in July by PrepRedzone.com
- Transfer from Lutheran (Orange) where he played on offense and defense for the Lancers in the Spring

**9 Ben Durham | Defensive Back | Junior | 5-11 / 195**

- Registered a team-high 12 tackles (tied with teammate Donovan Comestro) in loss @ Norco
- Spring 2021 Letterman
- Listed on PrepRedzone.com’s “Watch List” of state prospects for Class of 2023

**10 Ryan Zolnick | Defensive End / Linebacker | Senior | 6-1 / 215**

- Ranked No. 85 by *Orange County Register* of Hot-150 Top Impact Players for Fall 2021
- Transfer from JSerra Catholic (San Juan Capistrano)
- Spring 2021 All-Trinity League First-Team - Defense
- Registered 17 total tackles and two sacks in spring 2021 season

**11 Levar Talley | Defensive Line | Sophomore | 6-3 / 205**

- Spring 2021 Letterman
- Listed on PrepRedzone.com’s “Watch List” of state prospects for Class of 2024

**12 Gage Grant | Quarterback / Strong Safety / Athlete | Senior | 6-0 / 180**

- Ranked No. 132 by *Orange County Register* of Hot-150 Top Impact Players for Fall 2021
- Recognized as an outstanding player at the 7-on-7 “Battle at the Beach” Passing Tournament at Edison (Huntington Beach) in July by PrepRedzone.com
- Transfer from Tustin High School where he spent last two school years after completing freshman year at Mater Dei
- Spring 2019 Empire League Co-Defensive Player of the Year at Tustin High School - Strong Safety
- Saw significant action at quarterback and strong safety for the Tillers who finished in a three-way tie for the Empire League title with Pacifica (Garden Grove) and Cypress
- As a QB, completed 63.8% of pass attempts and threw 10 touchdowns. Rushed for three touchdowns and added one receiving
- Connected for four touchdown passes in each of the final two games of spring 2021 season for the Tillers versus Kennedy (La Palma) and Valencia (Placentia)

**13 Donovan Comestro | Defensive Back | Junior | 6-0 / 160**

- Registered a team-high 12 tackles (tied with teammate Ben Durham) in loss @ Norco
- Collected one interception in win over San Juan Hills in season-opener
- Spring 2021 All-Trinity League Second-Team - Defense
- Notched 16 total tackles (4 for loss), a half sack, one interception, three pass defenses and forced two fumbles in Spring 2021

**18 Jalen Jones | Wide Receiver | Senior | 5-10 / 180**

- Ranked No. 58 by *Orange County Register* of Hot-150 Top Impact Players for Fall 2021
- Listed on PrepRedzone.com’s “Watch List” of state prospects for the Class of 2022
- Spring 2021 All-Trinity League Second-Team - Offense
- Caught 15 passes for 195 yards (13.0 average) and two touchdowns in Spring 2021
- Has received offers from Valparaiso and Davidson
- A speed-burner, has run 10.9 in the 100-meters
- A member of the Eagles track team, participating in the 100, 200 and 4x100 meter relay

**19 Ian Grogan | Wide Receiver | Senior | 6-0 / 185**

- Rushed four times while appearing at running back in Spring 2021, scoring two touchdowns. Also added one receiving
- 2019 All-Trinity League Second-Team - Offense
- Team leader with 511 receiving yards (21.3 average) in 2019 with two touchdowns

- Notched career highs with five receptions along with 113 yards receiving in loss at Cherry Creek in 2019

#### **24 Romen Christensen | Linebacker / Punter | Senior | 5-10 / 180**

- Selected Team Special Teams Player of the Week vs. San Juan Hills - 08/20/21
- Led the team with 9 total tackles in season-opening win against San Juan Hills

#### **34 Blake Wilson | Defensive Back / Kicker / Punter | Junior | 5-11 / 170**

- Connected for a successful 46-yard field goal in loss @ Norco
- Recognized by PrepRedzone.com as one of the Top Defensive Performances for Week 0
- Selected Team Defensive Player of the Week vs. San Juan Hills - 08/20/21
- Registered 2 interceptions in win over San Juan Hills in season-opener -- first two of his career
- Spring 2021 All-Trinity League Second-Team - Defense
- Second on team in Spring 2021 in total tackles with 32
- Handles the team's kick-off duties

#### **42 Nick Foye | Running Back | Junior | 5-10 / 190**

- Named to OCVarsity.com Orange County "Bonus List of Top Contenders & Overlooked Players"
- Selected Team Offensive Player of the Week vs. San Juan Hills - 08/20/21
- Rushed for a career-high 181 yards on 21 attempts (8.6 average) in season opening win against San Juan Hills. Also scored one touchdown

#### **45 Hero Kanu | Defensive Tackle | Senior | 6-5 / 300**

- A Top-100 national and Top-10 California 5-star prospect currently with 24 offers from Division 1 Power Five conference schools. On July 9, officially narrowed down to ten: Alabama, Ohio State, Notre Dame, Clemson, LSU, Oklahoma, USC, Georgia, Washington and Texas
- Ranked No. 1 Top Prospect for Class of 2022 by Europe's Elite / europeselite.com
- Ranked No. 1 Prep Prospect from Germany for Class of 2021 / 2022 by Europe's Elite / europeselite.com
- MaxPreps.com Fall 2021 Preseason All-State Team - Defense (DL)
- Ranked No. 6 by yahoo.com Sports in Top 25 Class of 2022 High School Players from California
- Cal-Hi Sports Fall 2021 Preseason All-State First-Team - Defense (DL)
- Cal-Hi Sports Fall 2021 Preseason All-Orange County First-Team - Defense (DL)
- scorebooklive.com Fall 2021 Preseason All-State Team - Defense (DL)
- SI.com All-American Watch List - Top Interior Defensive Linemen - "Notable"
- Ranked No. 10 by *Orange County Register* of Hot-150 Top Impact Players for Fall 2021
- Ranked No. 1 defensive lineman in Orange County for Fall 2021 by the *Orange County Register*
- *Los Angeles Times* Top 10 Defensive Linemen to Watch in Fall 2021
- *Los Angeles Times* Prep Rally: "Big Men to Watch" in Fall 2021
- MaxPreps.com compares to Kanu to Cameron Hayward of the Pittsburgh Steelers
- Ranked No. 8 overall prospect in the state by MaxPreps.com
- Ranked No. 1 prospect in the state and No. 7 in the nation at defensive tackle by MaxPreps.com
- Ranked No. 9 overall prospect in the state and No. 1 at defensive tackle by PrepRedzone.com for Class of 2022
- Cal-Hi Sports Fall 2021 Preseason Hot 100 - No. 11 overall in state for Class of 2022
- *Orange County Register's* - "Juniors Who Will Reign in the Fall of 2021"
- 2022 All-American Bowl game invitee (San Antonio) -- January 8, 2022: Will announce college selection
- Spring 2021 All-Trinity First-Team League - Defense
- Ranked No. 8 defensive lineman in the state after Spring 2021 season by scorebooklive.com
- scorebooklive.com Spring 2021 All-State Football Team (DL)
- Cal-Hi Sports Spring 2021 All-State Second-Team - Defense (DL)
- Cal-Hi Sports Spring 2021 All-State First-Team - Defense - Junior Team (DL)
- MaxPreps.com Spring 2021 All-State Second-Team - Defense (DL)
- *Los Angeles Times* Spring 2021 All-Star High School First-Team - Defense (DL)
- Class of 2022 "Stock Risers" selection by PrepRedzone.com
- Cal-Hi Sports Winter 2021 Class of 2022 Top-100 recruit

#### **62 Jalani Liva | Offensive Line | Junior | 6-4 / 320**

- Recognized as a "Lineman on the Rise" in Orange County for Fall 2021 by the *Orange County Register*
- Spring 2021 Letterman

- Ranked the No. 124 overall prospect in the state by PrepRedzone.com for Class of 2023 and Outstanding Newcomer

### 67 Kilian O'Connor | Offensive Line | Senior | 6-2 / 285

- Has received an offer from Columbia
- Cal-Hi Sports Fall 2021 Preseason All-State Second-Team - Offense (OL)
- Ranked No. 5 offensive lineman in Orange County for Fall 2021 by PrepRedzone.com
- Ranked No. 61 by *Orange County Register* of Hot-150 Top Impact Players for Fall 2021
- Ranked No. 6 offensive lineman in Orange County for Fall 2021 by the *Orange County Register*
- Listed on PrepRedzone.com's "Watch List" of state prospects for the Class of 2022
- Spring 2021 All-Trinity League Second-Team - Offense
- Cal-Hi Sports Winter 2021 No. 63 state prospect for Class of 2022
- Cal-Hi Sports Summer 2020 No. 59 state prospect for Class of 2022
- 2019 All-Trinity League First-Team - Offense

## THIS WEEK'S OPPONENT: ST. AUGUSTINE



### SMCHS Season Game No. 3 / Non-League Game No. 3

Game Day / Date: Friday, September 3, 2021 @ Saddleback College, 7:00 p.m.

School Location: San Diego, California

Nickname: Saints

Head Coach: Joe Kremer (20-11, .645) - 4th Season

2021 Fall Record: 0-2

Last Week: Lost vs. Oceanside, 17-14

2021 Spring Season: 2-2 Overall | 1-2 Western League

2019 Season: 8-3 Overall | 3-1 Western League (Tie-1st) | 2-1 CIF-SD Section - Open Division (2nd)

All-Time Series: 2 Games - Santa Margarita Catholic Leads 2-0-0

Last Game / SMCHS Win: -- Santa Margarita Catholic won 27-7 @ St. Augustine

#### Players to Watch:

- Ayo Shotomide | Senior | Wide Receiver / Cornerback
- Justin Stearns | Senior | Outside Linebacker / Tight End
- Dominic Gross | Senior | Cornerback / Wide Receiver
- Gracen Halton | Senior | Defensive End / Tight End
- Luke Bolin | Senior | Offensive Tackle
- Adan Luna | Senior | Offensive Tackle

In Brief: The Saints' 2-2 mark in the spring ended a streak of 20-straight winning seasons. But expect Joe Kremer's crew to return to its winning ways this fall. The defense is blitz-heavy and pressuring, as usual. Gracen Halton, an Oregon commit, makes quarterbacks uncomfortable. Linebacker Justin Stearns is a San Jose State commit. The offense shifts to an RPO (run-pass option) look with Kremer wanting to pass more. Junior offensive tackle Misa Sandoval goes 6-6, 330 and is a solid protector of quarterback Kyle Herburger who boasts a big arm. Isiah Pressley will do the bulk of the heavy work on the ground. He is the half-brother of former Saints great Elijah Preston, one of the San Diego Section's top all-time rushers.

## NEXT WEEK'S OPPONENT: NOLAN CATHOLIC



### SMCHS Season Game No. 3 / Non-League Game No. 3

Game Day / Date: Saturday, September 11, 2021 @ Panish Family Field - St. John Bosco (Bellflower), 1:30 p.m. -- "Trinity League Football Showcase"

School Location: Ft. Worth, Texas

Nickname: Vikings

Head Coach: David Beaudin (36-19, .655) - 6th Season

2021 Fall Record: 0-1

Last Week: Lost vs. Argyle (Texas), 45-29 (Tom Landry Classic @ Eagle Stadium - Allen, Texas)

2021 Spring Season: 8-1 Overall | 6-0 TAPPS Division I - District 1 (1st) | 2-1 District Playoffs (2nd)

2019 Season: 11-1 Overall | 4-0 TAPPS Division I - District 1 (1st) | 1-1 District Playoffs (2nd)

All-Time Series: First Meeting

#### Players to Watch:

- Curlee Thomas | Senior | Defensive End
- Kaleb James | Junior | Defensive Line (DE / DT)



- Saimone Davis | Junior | Tight End / Running Back
- Damario “Tre” Parks-Vinson | Senior | Wide Receiver / Cornerback

In Brief: Since the turn of the century in 2000, Nolan Catholic has succeeded in being one of the most consistent and winning programs in the Dallas area. Its resume includes 10 league championships and seven state crowns during that period. The Vikings have currently won three-consecutive league titles and are looking to notch their fourth this fall. In the shortened 2020 fall season, Nolan lost to rival Parish Episcopal (Dallas) in the TAPPS Division I - 1 District championship game last December. It was their only setback of the campaign (8-1). The offseason saw Nolan lose some key starting players via transfer who are highly coveted Power Five Division 1 recruits. Still, they have four starters returning on each side of the ball. The Vikings defensive line is notable. It is sleek and quick, causing headaches for offensive coordinators. Senior Curlee Thomas (6-4 / 240) and junior Kaleb James (6-5 / 235) both clog the front and can rush the corners with effective penetration. Thomas, senior and Cal-commit, compiled some gaudy statistics last season: 58 tackles, 22 tackles-for-loss and 16 sacks. James, a junior, was right there with his mate as he logged 57 tackles, 16 tackles-for-loss and 10 sacks.

## SANTA MARGAURITA CATHOLIC - ALL-TIME OUT-OF-STATE OPPONENTS

Season	Opponent	Result	Game Notes
2021	Nolan Catholic (Ft. Worth, Texas)	- - -	“Trinity League Football Showcase” at St. John Bosco (Bellflower)
2019	@ Cherry Creek (Greenwood Village, Colorado)	Lost 35-10	Traveled over 1,000 miles
2018	Orem (Utah)	Lost 51-45	Nenad: 3 receiving touchdowns
2018	Cherry Creek (Greenwood Village, Colorado)	Lost 21-14	Thomas: 111 rushing yards
2014	@ Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, Nevada)	Lost 41-10	Costello: 311 passing yards Sweet: 188 receiving yards
2013	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, Nevada)	Lost 34-31 (2 OT)	Costello: 446 passing yards Sweet: 294 receiving yards
2012	@ Brophy Prep (Phoenix, Arizona)	Won 27-14	ESPN national television broadcast
2005	@ Kealakehe (Kona, Hawaii)	Won 26-0	“Kona Classic” / 26-0 shutout win
1997	@ Durango (Las Vegas, Nevada)	Won 52-0	Wolfsberger: 191 rushing yards

## TRINITY LEAGUE



[www.trinityleagueathletics.org](http://www.trinityleagueathletics.org)

### Upcoming Trinity League Schedule

#### Friday, September 3

**JSerra Catholic (San Juan Capistrano)** @ Newport Harbor (Newport Beach), 7:00 p.m.

Bishop Amat (La Puente) @ **St. John Bosco (Bellflower)**, 7:00 p.m.

Edison (Huntington Beach) vs. **Orange Lutheran** @ Orange Coast College (Costa Mesa), 7:00 p.m.

**Servite (Anaheim)** - Bye

**Mater Dei (Santa Ana)** - Bye

#### Thursday, September 9

**Servite (Anaheim)** @ Bishop Amat (La Puente), 7:00 p.m.

#### Friday, September 10

Centennial (Corona) @ **JSerra Catholic (San Juan Capistrano)**, 7:00 p.m.

East St. Louis (Illinois) @ **St. John Bosco (Bellflower)**, 7:00 p.m. -- “Trinity League Football Showcase”

**Orange Lutheran** @ Damien (La Verne), 7:00 p.m.

**Mater Dei (Santa Ana)** vs. Liberty (Henderson, Nevada) @ Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas), 7:00 p.m. -- “4th Polynesian Football Classic”