

# High schools sports kick into gear

*Area teams prove they can hold their own in soccer, basketball and football in CCS matches*

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The Salinas Californian

High school teams in the Salinas Valley have proven through the years they can compete with the best.

Playing in the Central Coast Section

— an area that includes 113 schools and extends from South San Francisco to King City — Salinas Valley and the surrounding area continue to field teams that challenge for league and section titles.

This school year, the Alisal boys varsity soccer team was nationally ranked and reached the semifinals of the CCS Division I playoffs before losing to defending champion Watsonville.

Seaside High fielded championship football and basketball teams. Both not only won a Monterey Bay League crown but advanced to their respective CCS title games.

The MBL is one of three Salinas-area leagues and is part of a major realignment package that will kick in next school year.

Two of the six MBL schools — Alvarez and Alisal — will move to the large-school Tri-County Athletic League for the 2006-2007 school year.

The T-CAL also includes North Salinas, Salinas, Hollister, Gilroy as well as private schools Palma and Notre Dame.

Replacing Alisal and Alvarez in the MBL is Watsonville High and Pajaro Valley of Watsonville.

In addition to Seaside, the two new-

comers will join an MBL that also includes North Monterey County, Monterey, and Monte Vista Christian School of Watsonville.

The small-school Mission Trail Athletic League remains unchanged with Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield, King City, Pacific Grove, Carmel, Stevenson, Santa Catalina, York and Anzar.

This past season, the Soledad boys basketball team ended Pacific Grove's streak of three straight titles, while Stevenson won the girls basketball crown for the first time since 1999.

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## SHOPPING/ Outdoor options

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"Bloom is coming in for the summer; they're apparel for younger female crowd, and also Aeropostale, we're really excited about them coming."

In the same complex is a Toys "R" Us and a 14-screen Century Theatres. A Best Buy electronics store is on the way.

■ **Creekbridge Village** at Constitution and Independence is a newer center with 96,000 square feet.

Some of the Creekbridge Village businesses are Panda Express, Starbucks, Hollywood Video, Juice it Up, Curves, Baskin Robbins, Quizno's, Verizon, Nails Unlimited, Super Cuts, The Grill, Tanner's Cove, the UPS Store and Norm Yop/Monte Bella Real Estate.

■ **Sherwood Gardens Shopping Center**, 933 N. Main St., (422-7455) across from the Salinas Sports Complex, provides ample parking and a strip of one-level shopping that includes 24 Hour Fitness, Arteaga's grocery outlet, Mattress Land, Kragen's Auto Supply and Sherwood Care Pharmacy, along with restaurants and several fast-food places, such as Subway, Taquitos, and Arby's. Hours of operation vary from store to store.

■ **Harden Ranch Plaza Shopping Center** at 1490 N. Main St., (449-6672) is a series of blocks with large chain stores, such as Target, Home Depot, Circuit City, Marshall's, Office Depot, Pier 1, Safeway, Pet Fun and Party City. Scattered between those larger stores are places such as Payless Shoes and Jamba Juice. Restaurant favorites such as Red Lobster, Dynasty Court, Olive Garden, Jack-in-the-Box and Mountain Mike's are sprinkled throughout the complex.

■ **Westridge Shopping Center**, along North Davis Road east of Laurel Drive (449-2475), is a long strip series of large

brand stores such as Wal-Mart, Costco, PetSmart, OfficeMax, Albertson's, La-Z-Boy Furniture and Ethan Allen.

Multiple parking areas are provided, and the shopping includes multiple, smaller strips of one-level shopping with banking services, fast food and other assorted retail stores.

Restaurants along the strip include Outback Steakhouse, Chevy's Fresh Mex, Marie Callender's and Applebee's.

■ **Star Shopping Center**, 1215-1273 at South Main and Blanco Road in Salinas (424-4821), is at the far south end of Salinas heading out on Highway 68.

"Our average tenant stays with us for more than 20 years," said John Prader, the center's manager. "We cater to local service-oriented businesses."

Some of those businesses include Star Market Grocery, Star Market Pharmacy, Ace Hardware, Kragen's Auto Supply, H&R Block, Lou's Wash N' Dry, Vision Optical, Yoga High, Hair Unlimited, the Animal Health Center, MetzFresh, ALCO, Children's Circle of Friends, along with others. There is ample parking and single-level shopping.

If you're hungry while you're there, check out McDonald's, Papa Murphy's Pizza or the Super Pollo Taqueria.

■ **South Main Street** runs from Oldtown to Highway 68 and has retail stores such as JoyPers, Hollywood Video and Furniture City.

Parking is not available on South Main but is usually ample behind the stores.

■ **East Alisal Street** shopping choices are multiple and varied. They run from Main Street eastward and have several blocks of well-maintained stores with ample lot or street parking areas.

The Mi Pueblo Plaza houses the new Mi Pueblo Food Center. Other popular choices on Alisal are Food Co.,

Novedades Norma, Ely's Furniture, Villa Lobos Market, Chief Auto Parts and the Mini Mall at 622 E. Alisal (769-0700). There you'll find locally owned, boutique-type jewelry, clothing, beauty services and convenience stores.

■ **Shaker Square** at Natividad and Boronda roads provides shoppers with Nob Hill Foods, Longs Drugs Store and Blockbuster, plus Little Austin's Texas Barbecue and Ole Taqueria. Some other stores in that center are Subway, Radio Shack, Great Clips and McDonalds.

Not far away, the city of Marina offers a number of shopping options, mostly in the shopping plazas along Reservation Road. But don't miss the bargain hunters' favorite flea market.

■ **Last Chance Mercantile**, at 14201 Del Monte Blvd. in Marina, open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Offering donated items from furniture to car parts to garden supplies, all profits support the Monterey County Waste Management District's recycling activities.

Some of the region's best shopping can be done on the Monterey Peninsula.

■ **Del Monte Center** in Monterey (373-2705, [www.delmontecenter.com](http://www.delmontecenter.com)) has more than 85 shops and restaurants and a 13-screen movie theater. You could definitely call this an all-day shopping experience.

It lies in a picturesque setting at Highway 1 and Munras Avenue, about 30 minutes from Salinas and just minutes from the beach. Hours are Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Shopping attractions include Macy's, Whole Foods, Chico's, Big 5, The Gap, Borders Express, The Limited and Victoria Secret. For younger shoppers, there's Pac-Sun, Claire's Boutique and

Hot Topic.

■ **American Tin Cannery Premium Outlets**, at 125 Ocean View Blvd. in Pacific Grove (372-1442), is near the Monterey Bay Aquarium and historic Cannery Row.

This oceanfront shopping center has more than 84 different stores and merchant locations all within walking distance. Some stores include Nine West, Geoffrey Beene, Bass Shoes and Van Heusen.

■ **The Barnyard**, (624-8886, [www.thebarnyard.com](http://www.thebarnyard.com)) at Highway 1 and Carmel Valley Road, is a village of 55 fine shops, galleries and restaurants in an award-winning setting of gardens and stone walkways.

Unlike a typical mall atmosphere, the multi-level, wandering paths are beautiful and give the shopper a sense of being privileged to shop in the charming grove. In the center of the unique artsy village is The Thunderbird, a combination bookstore and restaurant.

Other shops include Mary's Boutique, From Tee to Green and Hudson & Company.

■ **The Crossroads** at 243 Crossroads Blvd. in Carmel Valley (625-4106) is a delightful shopping village with more than 70 shops, restaurants and services.

This is an outdoor shopping mall with many dog-friendly outdoor restaurants and a pet store.

Vermillion, a unique antique shop featuring museum-quality contemporary and antique Japanese artifacts, is a wonderful find. The Travel Bag has more than 400 travel accessories.

■ **The Prunetree Shopping Center**, at the junction of highways 101 and 156 in Prunedale, has more than 25 stores and services bridging the shopping miles between Gilroy and Salinas.

Some stores include Longs Drug Store, Starbucks, Auto Zone, Radio Shack, Blockbuster and Van's Shoes.