THE TRENCH REPORT
BIG RICK DELGADO · RANCHO CUCAMONGA

THE RULING · WEEK 6
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2026

WEEK 6 · FOUR GAMES · FOUR RIGHT · AND THE MACHINE WASN'T CLOSE

# THE COMPUTER SAID 23–13. IT WAS 36–0.

I got all four winners. I was closer than the computer on three of them. And on the one everybody told me I was crazy about, the thing that's supposed to be objective missed by twenty-six points.

BY BIG RICK DELGADO · WRITTEN SUNDAY, SEPT. 27 · POSTED FRIDAY, OCT. 2

Four games. Four winners. **I got every one of them.**

I've been running this ledger in public for two weeks getting my teeth kicked in by a spreadsheet, so you'll forgive me for enjoying this one. But the record isn't even the part I want to show you. Anybody can pick winners. Here's what the machine actually said those games were going to look like.

## WHAT THE COMPUTER ACTUALLY TOLD YOU

The model doesn't print a score. It prints a margin and a win probability, and that's all it has ever printed — it's on the method page and I'm not going to pretend otherwise. So I did the one piece of arithmetic it won't do for you. I took its margin and laid it on the actual total points scored in the game. That's the score it was describing.

**That arithmetic is mine, not the model's.** The margin and the percentage are its.

### THE COMPUTER'S NUMBER VS. THE FOOTBALL GAME

| | |
|---|---|
| Summit at Edison — computer | Edison by 10.3 · 76.9% → **23–13** |
| Rick said | Edison 31–13 |
| It was | **Edison 36–0** |
| | |
| SJ at Aquinas — computer | SJ by 24.9 · 96.2% → **27–3** |
| Rick said | San Jacinto 27–14 |
| It was | **San Jacinto 20–10** |
| | |
| Servite at Damien — computer | Servite by 28.7 · 98.0% → **33–4** |
| Rick said | Servite 35–21 |
| It was | **Servite 28–9** |
| | |
| SC at Murrieta Valley — computer | SC by 21.3 · 93.6% → **38–17** |
| Rick said | San Clemente 31–24 |
| It was | **San Clemente 42–13** |

Finals from the Sept. 25 California scoreboards at SI.com and Yahoo Sports, plus the MaxPreps recaps. Implied scores are the model's margin over the real total — my arithmetic, its number.

Read that top block again. **The computer looked at Summit and Edison and described a twenty-three to thirteen football game.** A one-score night. Competitive. Summit hangs around.

Summit did not score. Not once. Thirty-six to nothing.

Twenty-six points wrong, on a game it was seventy-seven percent sure about. And I'm the guy who's supposed to be the loudmouth in the garage.

## THE MARGIN COLUMN, WHICH IS THE ONLY COLUMN THAT SEPARATED US

Both of us got all four winners, so the winners column can't tell you anything this week. Fine. Here's the one that can.

### HOW FAR OFF — MARGIN

| | |
|---|---|
| Servite / Damien — real margin 19 | Computer off 9.7 · **Rick off 5** |
| Summit / Edison — real margin 36 | Computer off 25.7 · **Rick off 18** |
| SJ / Aquinas — real margin 10 | Computer off 14.9 · **Rick off 3** |
| SC / Murrieta Valley — real margin 29 | **Computer off 7.7** · Rick off 22 |
| Total, four games | Computer **58.0** · Rick **48.0** |

Closer on three of four. Ten points better across the week. On the San Jacinto game I was off by **three** and it was off by fifteen.

Friday, before any of these kicked off, I wrote down exactly what I was going to do: the model is very good at who and much worse at how much, because it has never once seen a team play. I said I'd take its winners and fight it on the number.

Then I did that. In public. With the picks timestamped before kickoff and the ledger sitting right there where anybody can check it.

THE RULING MOVES TO SUNDAY. HERE'S WHY, AND IT ISN'T AN EXCUSE.

I told you twice that this lands Saturday morning and I missed it twice. So either I'm slow or the promise was wrong, and it was the promise.

Here's what kept happening. The committee's scale re-rates **Sunday night.** Write the ruling Saturday and you're handing somebody a box score. Write it Sunday and you can tell them Edison climbed eleven spots and Summit fell thirteen, which is the entire point of the Edison section below and did not exist as a number until last night.

Football's on Sunday anyway. The ruling is a Sunday piece. **That's the schedule now** and I'm saying it out loud instead of quietly sliding it every week and hoping nobody keeps score.

And then I wrote this on Sunday like I said I would, and it sat on my desk until Friday. Which is not Sunday. I'm aware. The schedule change survived exactly one week before I broke it myself.

Picks still go up before kickoff Friday. That one I've never missed and never will.

## EDISON 36, SUMMIT 0

This is the one I want on the record forever.

Friday I pulled Summit off my own card and put Edison on it. **A 1–3 team over a 4–1 team.** People told me in the replies that I'd lost it. The only thing I had was the schedule:

### THE ARGUMENT, FRIDAY

| | |
|---|---|
| Edison strength of schedule | **48.7 — 9th of 248** |
| Summit strength of schedule | **28.3 — 123rd** |
| Summit's four wins, opponents ranked | 215th, 182nd, 104th, 96th |
| Summit's average opponent | **minus 2.4** |

MaxPreps SOS, 9/25 pull. Section ranks from the committee's scale, same date.

And the sentence the whole thing hung on: **Summit's only loss was to the best team it had played.**

Thirty-six to nothing. That's not a win, that's an eviction notice. I said a 4–1 out of the Sunkist that hadn't beaten anybody was about to find out what the last month had been for, and it found out in about a quarter and a half.

I had Edison 31–13. I said Summit would score thirteen. They scored zero. So I was wrong too — wrong in the direction of not being nearly mean enough, which is a brand new experience for me and I'd like to have it again.

> SUNDAY NIGHT, THE SCALE CAME AROUND
>
> **Edison 19.6 → 25.2**, section rank 49 → 38. Was projecting D4 as a 9-seed. Now projects D3 as a 14-seed.
>
> **Summit 11.8 → 9.3**, rank 72 → 85. Down thirteen spots and out of its band.
>
> A 1–3 team passed a 4–1 team by eleven spots in one night. Records are a story people tell each other. The margin is the receipt.

## SAN JACINTO: THE STAMP HOLDS

I put them on the stand Friday, stamped them **HALF-REAL**, and set the test myself so nobody could move it afterward: **win by 25 or more and I was wrong.**

They won by ten. At Aquinas. A 1–4 team.

Five games now: by 3, by 10, by 2, by 12, by 10. **Thirty-seven points across an entire season.** Nobody has beaten them by more than two touchdowns and they haven't beaten anybody by more than two touchdowns. Five for five.

The computer, meanwhile, had them winning that game by twenty-five at ninety-six percent. It was describing a 27–3. It got 20–10.

And then Sunday it quietly agreed with me anyway: **San Jacinto 32.3 → 32.7.** Didn't move a single spot. Still 28th, still D3, still the 4-seed. Beat a 1–4 team by ten on the road and the scale hands you four tenths of a point. That's not an insult. That's a receipt.

**HALF-REAL holds.** They're 5–0 and I still think somebody in Division 3 puts hands on them in November. Ask me again when they play one.

## SERVITE 28, DAMIEN 9

Right winner, and my best number of the week. I had Servite by fourteen. Real margin nineteen. The computer wanted twenty-nine and was describing a 33–4.

Servite won and **dropped** — 54.5 → 50.4, rank 9 → 10. Beat a 3–2 team by nineteen when the scale wanted twenty-nine, and you lose rating doing it. **Damien went 23.3 → 26.4 and climbed three spots losing the football game.**

That's the thing I've been hollering about for two weeks happening to somebody who isn't me.

## WHERE I GOT COOKED

Now the part I'd skip if this were somebody else's account.

**San Clemente 42, Murrieta Valley 13.**

I had 31–24. Real margin twenty-nine. The computer was seven off and **I was twenty-two off** — the worst number either of us put up all week, and it was mine. The computer's implied 38–17 was close to a 42–13. Mine wasn't in the same area code.

Here's the actual mistake, and it's uglier than the number. I had Murrieta Valley scoring twenty-four on a top-ten team because they're 2–2 with both losses to good people, and I talked myself into *they're better than their record.* They scored thirteen.

Which is precisely, word for word, the thing I spent all of Friday accusing Summit's résumé of being. I read a record and I wrote a story. I did the exact thing. Same week. Different team.

Sunday: **San Clemente 52.4 → 54.8**, and they take the top seat in D2 off Servite. **Murrieta Valley 28.6 → 26.7**, rank 32 → 35.

## WEEK 7

Four for four on winners. Closer than the computer on three of four. A 1–3 team I backed against a 4–1 team won by thirty-six and the scale moved eleven spots to say I was right.

The season ledger still reads **Computer 6–0, Rick 5–2**, because that thing hasn't missed a winner yet and I have. I'm not going to pretend the scoreboard says something it doesn't. But it's been telling you what those games would look like all year, and this week you got to see its homework next to mine.

Wednesday: three games. Thursday: somebody goes on the stand. Friday: picks, before kickoff.

Sunday: the ruling, with the re-rate in it. That's the schedule, and now it's in writing.

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**SOURCES.**

Finals: California scoreboards for Sept. 25, 2026 at SI.com and Yahoo Sports; MaxPreps game recaps for San Jacinto and Aquinas (Team Reports, published Sept. 27). Ratings, section ranks and division bands: the committee's scale, ordering pulls dated 2026-09-25 and 2026-09-27. Strength of schedule: MaxPreps, 2026-09-25 pull.

**IMPLIED SCORES ARE NOT MODEL OUTPUT**

— the model prints a margin and a win probability only; the implied scores here are that margin applied to the game's actual total points, which is my arithmetic. Division bands are the method page's arithmetic applied to that ordering — D1 is ranks 1–8, then sixteen per division through D14 — and are not a CIF bracket. CIF sets no divisions until the regular season ends. Model output

covers one game between two rated teams: it does not project brackets, seeds or titles. Every judgment about who is real is mine.

## WEEK 6

| | |
|---|---|
| Rick, winners | **4–0** |
| Computer, winners | **4–0** |
| Rick, total margin miss | **48.0** |
| Computer, total margin miss | **58.0** |
| Rick closer in | **3 of 4** |

## SEASON LEDGER

| | |
|---|---|
| Computer | **6–0** |
| Rick | **5–2** |

A pick is right if it named the winner. Margin gets argued about; margin doesn't win the row — same rule as when it was costing me. It's on the method page.

## BIGGEST MISS, WEEK 6

| | |
|---|---|
| Computer — Summit/Edison | **off 25.7** |
| Rick — SC/Murrieta Valley | **off 22** |

## SUNDAY RE-RATE

| | |
|---|---|
| Edison | 19.6 → 25.2 · D4 → D3 |
| Summit | 11.8 → 9.3 · down 13 |
| San Clemente | 52.4 → 54.8 · D2 1-seed |
| Servite | 54.5 → 50.4 · won, dropped |
| Damien | 23.3 → 26.4 · lost, climbed |
| San Jacinto | 32.3 → 32.7 · rank 28, unmoved |

Pull dated 2026-09-27.

## EVERY MARGIN, SAN JACINTO

| | |
|---|---|
| Beaumont | won by 3 |
| King (Riverside) | won by 10 |
| Chino Hills | won by 2 |
| at Great Oak | won by 12 |
| at Aquinas | won by 10 |
| Five games | **+37** |

## NEXT

**Wednesday:** The Three.

**Thursday:** somebody goes on the stand.

**Friday:** picks, before kickoff.

**Sunday:** the ruling, after the scale re-rates.