THE TRENCH REPORT
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THE THREE + WHO IS REAL · WEEK 7
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2026

WEEK 7 · THREE GAMES, ONE DEFENDANT, ONE TEAM I'M NOT PICKING

ORANGE GOT BETTER ON THE COUCH.

Didn't play last Friday. Moved up three spots anyway. Meanwhile Hesperia is 5–0 and 101st, Corona is 4–1 and 209th, and I've got four picks to make before seven o'clock.

BY BIG RICK DELGADO · FRIDAY, OCT. 2 · POSTED BEFORE KICKOFF

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EDISON AT MISSION VIEJO

Computer: MV −39.1
Rick: **Mission Viejo 35–17**

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CHINO HILLS AT DAMIEN

Computer: Damien −12.0
Rick: **Chino Hills 21–20**

THE THREE · 3

KING AT CORONA

Computer: King −36.6
Rick: **King 38–10**

WHO IS REAL

HESPERIA AT APPLE VALLEY

Computer: AV −16.8
Rick: **Apple Valley 28–14**

FIRST, ORANGE

Orange didn't play last Friday. Bye week. Feet up.

Sunday night the committee's scale re-rated everybody, and Orange went from **25.3 to 26.9**, from **36th to 33rd** in the section. Three spots. Without touching a football.

I'm not mad at the math. That's how a margin scale works: the teams you already beat go play somebody else, and your number moves. So what actually happened is other people's football games made Orange better. I would like that deal. I would like to get better at my job while somebody else does it.

Here's the rest of the file, since nobody else is going to print it.

ORANGE · THE FILE

Record	5–0
Committee's scale (9/27)	26.9 · 33rd
Strength of schedule (MaxPreps)	**25.86 · 118th of 252**
Four rated teams they've beaten	combined **9–13**
The fifth	Locke · not on the scale
Register Top 25, Sept. 14	19th · 22 points
Register Top 25, Sept. 28	19th · 22 points

One hundred eighteenth in strength of schedule. Edison, the team I backed last week, is 19th. Edison is 2–3. I would take Edison's 2–3 over most people's 5–0 and sleep like a baby.

And my favorite thing on the whole page is that Register poll. **Sept. 14: 19th, 22 points. Sept. 28: 19th, 22 points.** In between those two Mondays, Orange beat Etiwanda, which I told the entire internet they could not do.

They did it. The voters didn't move them one spot. Didn't move them one point.

That's not a ranking. That's a screensaver.

Now, I'm not picking tonight's game. Orange opens league tonight and the last time I picked an Orange game I had the other team by twenty-eight, missed by thirty-five, and wrote an entire movie about it, and every one of

you made sure I heard about it for a week. So I'm sitting this one out. I've learned exactly one thing this season and I'm going to protect it.

But I am still not a believer. A schedule ranked 118th is a schedule ranked 118th, and five wins over a schedule like that is five wins over a schedule like that. Nobody has made this team prove it yet. When somebody does, I'll be right here. I'm always right here. That's sort of the problem.

THE THREE

EDISON AT MISSION VIEJO

Friday 7:00 · Mission Viejo

THE COMPUTER

MISSION VIEJO −39.1

99.7%. Mission Viejo 61.8, 7th. Edison 25.2, 38th.

RICK

MISSION VIEJO 35–17

Right winner. The computer's number is the problem. Again.

Last Friday the computer had Edison by ten and Edison won by thirty-six. This Friday the computer has Edison losing by thirty-nine. Same team, seven days apart. I'd love to know what it thinks happened in between.

Here's what I know. Edison's strength of schedule is 19th in the section out of 252. They lost to Corona del Mar by 20 and to Palos Verdes by 25, and those are two of the top twenty teams in the section. Edison has spent all year getting punched by good teams and staying on its feet.

Mission Viejo is better than both of those. Seventh in the section, 61.8. I'm not stupid. Mission Viejo wins.

But thirty-nine? The computer is pricing Edison like they're Summit. Edison isn't Summit. Edison is the team that *did that* to Summit. Mission Viejo 35–17.

CHINO HILLS AT DAMIEN

Friday 7:00 · La Verne

THE COMPUTER

DAMIEN −12.0

80.4%. Damien 26.4, 36th. Chino Hills 16.9, 60th.

RICK

CHINO HILLS 21–20

The one game tonight where I'm picking a different winner.

Chino Hills has lost three football games this year. By one. By three. By two.

Six points. Total. Across three losses.

And look who to: Quartz Hill, 52nd. San Juan Hills, 24th. San Jacinto, 28th — the team I keep telling you can't beat anybody by more than two touchdowns, which beat Chino Hills by two points.

Now Damien. Damien's three wins are over teams ranked 70th, 97th and 117th. Their losses are to Tustin, to Servite, and to a team the committee's scale doesn't rate. And last week Damien lost to Servite by nineteen and **climbed three spots**, because the computer expected them to lose by twenty-nine. That's the scale's favorite team right now: a 3–3 squad that gets promoted for losing by less than it was supposed to.

Chino Hills is a coin-flip team that keeps losing the flip, going on the road to play a team the computer likes for reasons I find personally offensive. I'm calling heads. **Chino Hills 21–20.** That one's the ledger game this week, and if I'm wrong you'll read it from me first.

KING AT CORONA

Friday 7:00 · Corona

THE COMPUTER

KING −36.6

99.6%. King 19.4, 56th. Corona −19.7, 209th.

RICK

KING 38–10

FRAUD ALERT, issued on the road to somewhere else.

Corona is 4–1 with a plus-128 point differential, and if you stop reading right there you think you found something.

Keep reading. Corona's four wins are over teams ranked **215th, 268th, 350th and 357th** in the section. Their one loss was at home, to Bloomington. Bloomington is 249th.

So Corona lost to the 249th-best team in the Southern Section in their own building and then went and beat up four teams that are worse than that. That's the season.

The committee's scale has Corona 209th. MaxPreps has them 337th in the state. That's not a 4–1 team. That's a 4–1 schedule.

King's only loss is to San Jacinto, by ten. Yes, that San Jacinto. Yes, I know. Moving on.

FRAUD ALERT. King 38–10.

TIME TO FIND OUT WHO IS REAL: HESPERIA

Hesperia is 5–0. Undefeated, Mojave River League, plus-130 in point differential, two shutouts, haven't started league yet. Somebody up there is very excited and I'm about to ruin their afternoon.

THE RÉSUMÉ

at Palmdale · 2–3 · 159th	W 43–21
Jurupa Hills · 3–3 · 244th	W 34–0
Jordan · 0–6 · 286th	W 40–0
at La Quinta · not on the scale	W 29–22
at Eisenhower · 1–5 · 229th	W 35–8
Rated opponents, combined	**6–17**

THE COMPUTER SAYS

Hesperia 5.8 on the committee's scale (9/27). **101st in the section.** Projects to D7 as a 13-seed. Strength of schedule 19.93, 164th of 252. MaxPreps has them **206th in the state.**

THE EYE TEST

Two shutouts, and both of them came against teams ranked in the 240s and the 280s. One of them is Jordan. Jordan is 0–6. I don't give a team credit for beating 0–6. I give 0–6 a hug.

Their best win by the numbers is Palmdale, 159th. Their closest game all year was 29–22 at La Quinta, and La Quinta isn't even on the scale.

Here's what actually bothers me. **Hesperia has not played a single rated team with a winning record.** Not one. Five games, and the best record on any rated team they've played is 3–3.

THE VERDICT

FRAUD ALERT

Five wins, no evidence.

Tonight they go to Apple Valley. Apple Valley is 4–1, 20.1, 53rd, and its one loss is to Victor Valley. That's the first rated team with a winning record Hesperia will have seen all season.

The computer: **Apple Valley by 16.8, 88.5%.** Me: **Apple Valley 28–14.**

> WHAT SETTLES IT
>
> Hesperia wins and I was wrong, and I'll say so Sunday in the same size font I wrote this in. Hesperia loses close, they're HALF-REAL and I'll say that too. Apple Valley wins by two touchdowns and we never speak of this undefeated season again.

SOURCES.

Ratings, section ranks and division bands: the committee's scale, values in force from the Sept. 27 sweep (ordering dated Oct. 1). Strength of schedule: MaxPreps, board dated Sept. 27. State ranks: MaxPreps team pages, read Oct. 2. Venues and season results: MaxPreps schedule pages, read Oct. 2. Orange County Register Top 25 (Fryer): Sept. 14 and Sept. 28 editions. Model line: expected margin = home rating + 2.5 − away rating; win probability = Φ(margin ÷ 14). It produces a margin and a probability for one game between two rated teams and does not project brackets, seeds or titles. Division bands are the method page's arithmetic — D1 is ranks 1–8, then sixteen per division through D14 — and are not a CIF bracket. Every score pick and every verdict is mine.

TONIGHT'S FOUR

Edison at Mission Viejo	MV 35–17
Chino Hills at Damien	CH 21–20
King at Corona	King 38–10
Hesperia at Apple Valley	AV 28–14

Agrees with the computer on three winners. Disagrees on one: Chino Hills.

SEASON LEDGER

Computer	**6–0**
Rick	**5–2**
Week 6	4–0 / 4–0
Week 6 margin miss	Rick 48 · Computer 58

A pick is right if it named the winner. Rule's on the method page. Full Week 6 ruling: here.

NOT ON THIS CARD

Orange opens league tonight. I'm not picking it. Explained why up top, and the explanation is mostly me being scared of my own track record.

NEXT

Tonight: finals as they land, source named on each.

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