



Published Sunday, February 4, 2007 10:21 PM PST

Sports

Locals battle to league's end

Soccer: Boys' and girls' teams compete for a Pacific League title and more in this week's final games.

By Gabriel Rizk

GLENDALE — With just two games remaining in the Pacific League boys' and girls' soccer seasons, the coming week will be a scramble of teams jockeying for playoff position.

Also, there will be some teams gunning for moral victories and rivalry bragging rights to add some intrigue to the mix.

In the boys' field, Hoover High (8-1-3) leads second place Arcadia in the standings with 19 points.

Hoover can clinch the league title with a win in either of its final two games, and at least a share of the title with an Arcadia (7-3-2, 16 points) loss in either of the Apaches' two remaining contests.

A two-game collapse to close the season, coupled with the Arcadia winning its final two would drop the Tornadoes into second.

But even if Arcadia does not win one or either of its two games, going 0-2 this week could still cost Hoover the outright league title.

Third place Burroughs enters the week with 15 points, at 6-3-3, and by winning its final two games can force a tie with Hoover for the championship if the Tornadoes remain stuck on 19 points, and Arcadia wins no more than one of its final two.

The Tornadoes' first opportunity to clinch with a victory will come on its home field Tuesday against Crescenta Valley (4-2-6), which enters the week in fourth place with 14 points.

First-year Hoover Coach Charles Martinez will be pushing his team to take care of business Tuesday, to avoid a potential must-win showdown at archrival Glendale in the season finale.

"We want to win [Tuesday] and celebrate at home," Martinez said. "Also, we don't want to have to try and win against our rival because it is always a different kind of game, with a lot of friction [between the teams]. The emotions are different."

The Nitros (3-7-2), in sixth place with eight points, are out of playoff contention but showed themselves to be apt spoilers in upsetting Arcadia, 3-2, at home Feb. 2.

"Sadly enough we helped Hoover [by beating Arcadia]," Glendale Coach Carlos Santiesteban said. "We don't want Hoover to win [the league title]. We want to beat them."

The Falcons, fighting for their playoff lives with Muir (3-3-6, 12 points) still capable of passing them up for the final berth, have quite a bit at stake Tuesday as well.

"[The Hoover game] turns out to be a huge one," said Falcons Coach Randy Lilavois, whose team finishes the season against Arcadia at home on Thursday. "Its going to be a battle, and we have to get points from the two toughest teams in league."

The most dominant girls' soccer team in the Pacific League this season has been Crescenta Valley.

On Friday the Falcons (11-0-1, 23 points) saw their bid for a perfect league season end with a 1-1 tie at Burbank, but in the process clinched their first league title since 2005, and first outright since 1997.

"We're going, we're not stopping," Falcons' Coach Cesar Hidalgo said of the team's games against Hoover on Tuesday, and at Arcadia on Thursday. "The idea is not to let down. We have to go in on our own terms if we want to do well in CIF."

While those games will be little more than playoff tuneups for Crescenta Valley, the season finale at Arcadia will likely have implications on the rest of standings.

Arcadia (8-2-2) enters the week in second place, just one point ahead of Burbank (6-1-5). Both teams are guaranteed no worse than a third place finish as fourth place Pasadena (5-4-3) is four points behind Burbank.

Glendale (4-7-1) still retains an outside chance at a share of fourth place in league, but cannot qualify for the playoffs.

Four points behind Pasadena, with games against Burbank on Tuesday and at Hoover (4-8) on Thursday, the Nitros can pull into a fourth place tie with two wins if Pasadena stumbles in its final two games.

Due to their 0-1-1 record in head-to-head competition against Pasadena, however, they would cede the playoff tiebreaker.

-
- **GABRIEL RIZK** covers sports. He can be reached at (818) 637-3226 or by e-mail at gabriel.rizk@latimes.com.