At first glance the National Boys High School Championship looks lopsided.

In one bracket, you've got Jesuit, 3rd last year and champions the previous two season, Gonzaga, 2nd last year, 4th the year before, and Penn, 5th in 2009 and 3rd in 2008. All are fearsome teams, so much so that McQuaid Jesuit out of Rochester, NY is easy to overlook as the fourth member of that group.

In the other group, it's all a little different. All four teams are good, but certainly defending champs Xavier stands head and shoulders above the rest.

All the teams know, however, that this will be a challenging tournament. The top teams are still good, but what has changed about the single-school championship is that teams 5-8 are much better. Every regional champion is a high-quality team.

"This tournament is difficult because you are focused on one team, the first team you play, but at the same time you have to be prepared to play three games over two days," said Jesuit Head Coach John Shorey. "We look at the teams we've got: Penn and then either Gonzaga or McQuaid on the first day, and we know that's not going to be easy."

Shorey said he has run his team through all sorts of scenarios this season – double-game weekends, playing at home one day and away the next.

“Whatever we could throw at them we did, to get the boys to believe they could handle anything,” he said.

Jesuit defeated Fallbrook fairly easily this past weekend to win the California state title. Shorey said he was very pleased with how his team traveled, and how they kept their defense tight.

Penn has been playing very strong defense, and that’s what won them the Midwest title.

“Rugby in the Midwest has been getting better and better,” said Penn Head Coach Bart Bottorff. “The competitiveness of that tournament will help us get more prepared. We’re happy to be a part of it and use it to get ready for nationals, which will be tough, too.”

Gonzaga, which has beaten Xavier twice this year, is on a high and could well win the entire thing.

Head Coach Peter Baggetta said his team is (mostly) healthy and has depth. He entered the second half of his depth chart in the Maverick playoffs this past weekend, and while two players were unfortunately injured, the tournament helped develop depth.

“Last year we went through the entire Nationals with 18 guys, and it caught up with us,” Baggetta said. “This year we have more depth. The guys were in the weight room constantly this spring. We borrowed a page from the Cal book and started our drive to the playoffs. The guys met for early-morning runs and have been working really hard.”

Baggetta echoed Shorey in his concern about planning for three games and at the same time planning for just the first game. Gonzaga is expected to run out two relatively different squads for their two shortened games on Friday.

“You’ve got to plan for three and win the match in front of you,” said Baggetta. “We’ve been planning for that all season, and we feel we’ve done everything possible.”

Nationals is a new experience for McQuaid, but senior and co-captain told his local press that they will make the most of it.

"I never thought our team would be going to nationals. Obviously we're going there to compete for a national title, but justly the experience of going there is something that we can build on from now on for this program," said Klotz.

So Gonzaga takes on an untested McQuaid, who were #2 in the Northeast. Jesuit plays the always physically imposing Penn.