

The state of California is witnessing history in the boys 4x100.

Two things make track & field great: rivalries and history. Rivalries allow fans to compare a team against others on the track, and history allows fans to compare a team against others before them. Right now, the California 4x100 has both. Ten teams have already run under the 41 second barrier, and an eleventh team has run under 40 seconds, becoming the first California team to ever do so.

Running under 41 seconds is rare. Over the past fifty years, fewer than 100 California teams, many made up of the same athletes from year-to-year, have ever done so. Most years see one or two runs of such quality, which usually happen at the state meet. Some years there are none at all. As shown in the graph below, in the past ten non-covid years, there were no teams that ran under 41 seconds before the annual Arcadia invitational, so for eight teams to have run under 41 seconds by early April is very surprising. For eleven teams to have done so before the state meet is astonishing. It is literally unprecedented. In order to understand what's going on, I interviewed several coaches of the top 4x100 teams in the state to ask them: Why is the 4x100 so fast right now?

Number of California teams under 41 before Arcadia by year:

Year	Number of teams
2026	8
2025	3
2024	0
2023	0
2022	1
2019	1
2018	0
2017	0
2016	0
2015	0

Track & field has some of the highest participation of all high school sports; close to 100,000 high schoolers come out to run track in California alone every spring, a level of participation that creates the biggest contributor to the current depth: stellar athletes each year that force each other to excel in order to claim a state title at the divisionless California state championship in late May. In speaking on the quality of the 4x100, Coach Auhmad Rasheed of Newbury Park, who have run 40.96, said:

"I believe that every year a standard is set by a team or externally by competition.

The pace is the pace. Instilling that mantra in the athletes calls for both athletes and coaches to elevate. Practices are sharper and better attended by all.

Accountability is levied on all but especially on those who want to be mentioned

amongst the best. You mentioned 6 teams sub 41 in the 4x100m in your email.

By State, we might see all 9 lanes sub 41! The pace is the pace.”

One team that has certainly set a standard Coach Robinson speaks of is Servite high school. After annihilating every sprint relay record in the state last year with teams that consisted entirely of freshman and sophomores, Servite hasn't slowed a step in 2026, running 39.80 in the 4x100 and 1:22.78 in the 4x200, both among the top times in US history at the high school level. In answering if Servite's record-breaking success plays a role in pushing other teams in the state to excel too, Coach Thomas said “When you have a team that's having the type of success and run that we are having now, of course every arena that we step into everyone's looking at us. So we definitely have a target on our back, so it motivates our guys to step up their game a little bit and be better as well.”

One of the reasons for Servite's prominence is their historical significance. Despite some near misses over the last several decades, the sub-40 second 4x100 has remained out of reach to the best runners and programs in this state's history, who have tried, come close, and failed to break 40 seconds. It is difficult to contextualize how good some of these past teams were, but these were teams that frequently won by distances measured in the tens of meters, created state-championship winning dynasties, and produced athletes that would go on to become Olympians. For us to now witness something generations of athletes haven't is incredible, and absolutely pushes the teams they run against to excel.

Selection of some of the top California teams and their accolades

Data courtesy of Prepcaltrack.com

School	4x100 record	Year run	Accolades
Servite	39.70	2026	- 1 state championship team title
Long Beach Poly	40.14	1999	- 13 state championship team titles - 6 state 4x100 titles - dozens of individual titles
Hawthorne	40.24	1989	- 6 state championship team titles between 1993 and 1996
Muir	40.28	1997	- 5 state championship team titles, 3 state 4x100 titles
Vista Murrieta	40.32	2016	- 2 state championship team titles
Serra (Gardena)	40.49	2013	- 2 state championship team titles, 4 state 4x100 titles

Many of the best teams in the 4x100 are built off of athletes that have been running at the varsity level for years; not so for Coaches Sara Soltani of Cathedral and Crystal Irving of Long Beach Poly, whose teams are dissimilar to their prior year's A-team.

2025 Cathedral 4x100 (41.21 SB)	2026 Cathedral 4x100 (40.78 SB)
Tristin Collins	Jalen Ross
Brian Prince	Brian Prince
Sean Brooks	Raphael Graham
Antonio Walton	Gianni Hayes

2025 Long Beach Poly 4x100 (40.32 seasons best)	2026 Long Beach Poly 4x100 (40.69 seasons best)
Malachi Dawson	Lynnox Newton
Julius Johnson	Malachi Dawson
Jaylen Mcneil	Jaylen Mcneil
Donte Wright	Jayden Lawrence

These teams may appear new, but the groundwork for their success had already been laid over many years of immersion in a success-oriented culture. For Cathedral, every new team, no matter who is on it, is simply the scion of a program that has appeared on the podium more times than can be counted. Coach Soltani, in discussing her newest team's success, said:

“At Cathedral, our track and field program has always held itself to a high standard. As the state continues to get faster, and with many powerhouse teams

running significantly faster, we've had athletes step up to the plate to maintain that level of success. That same trend pushes us as a coaching staff to continuously grow and hold ourselves to that high standard to ensure our athletes keep improving. I think that mindset, combined with a strong tradition our athletes take pride in carrying on, has been a big factor. Our seniors who graduated also left a lasting impression on this team, and the current group is motivated to continue the success we've built over the last several years."

At Long Beach Poly, strong culture built up over decades of success has created teams ready to execute at a high level regardless of circumstance. "We're just trying to make sure that they're consistent. Our kids are very competitive, and regardless of the teams we have, and the combinations we have, they're always going to show up for long beach poly." Coach Irving said. "Either way it goes, we're always just gonna try to put our best foot forward, we're always gonna push our kids to be the best that they can be."

In addition to better competition, the internet has spread the latest and greatest training methods and philosophies, resulting in better athletes and coaches across the board. Discussing general improvement in the state, Coach Thomas said "I think California has definitely stepped up, I think you'll find that coaches are getting better, athletes are getting better, and with that it creates a perfect storm for you to see a numerous amount of teams break sub 41."

Another demonstration of statewide improvement comes from the state at-large marks, which are the minimum marks a runner must hit at their section masters meet to continue on to the state meet, and serve as a useful benchmark of year-to-year depth. Comparing the difference in marks between the years of 2019 and 2026, a time span of 7 years, shows significantly better times compared to the difference in marks between 2005 and 2019, a time span of 14 years.

State At-Large Marks, 2005-2026

2005 at-large	2005-2019 % change	2019 at-large	2019-2026 % change	2026 at-large
10.72	+0%	10.72	-1.50%	10.56
21.65	+0.74%	21.81	-2.13%	21.35
48.67	-0.29%	48.53	-0.87%	48.11

So, in a way, the 4x100's newfound depth has simply come to match what we've seen across all individual events.

Last year the 4x400 saw a similar explosion of depth, which would conclude with four teams running under 3:10 at the state meet, the first time it's ever happened in US history. The brutal qualifying rounds required to compete at the state meet often claim more than one top 4x100 team, so it's impossible to know who will claim a coveted state champion at the end of May. However, no matter what happens, we can be sure that the explosion of talent, spread of better training, and cutthroat competition will produce a race of the ages.