



2018 BIG WEST MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

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Coaches Select Long Beach State To Win Men's Volleyball Title

IRVINE, Calif. – Long Beach State is the pick of the six head coaches to capture the regular season title in the inaugural season of Big West men's volleyball.

Ranked No. 2 in the American Volleyball Coaches Association preseason poll, Long Beach State garnered four first-place votes and 34 points from the Big West coaches. Hawai'i, the No. 5-ranked team in the AVCA poll, claimed the other two first-place votes and 32 points for the runner-up spot. CSUN and UC Irvine tied for third with 21 points, while UC Santa Barbara was fifth with 10 points and UC San Diego sixth with eight points.

Long Beach State welcomes back three AVCA All-Americans in its starting lineup to lead the charge in 2018. Junior outside hitter **TJ DeFalco** is the reigning TeamSnap/AVCA Division I-II National Player of the Year after hitting .389 with 3.99 kills per set in 2017. A two-time AVCA First Team All-American, DeFalco notched double-digit kills in 29 of 31 matches. Junior outside hitter **Kyle Ensing** made the second team list as he hit .335 and averaged 3.37 kills per set last season. Directing the offense is junior setter **Josh Tuaniga**, the 2017 national leader in assists per set (11.06), and an AVCA First Team All-American. The trio helped the Beach lead the nation with a .366 attack percentage. The Beach finished 27-4 overall last year under AVCA Coach of the Year **Alan Knipe**, and reached the semifinals of the NCAA Tournament.

Hawai'i joined LBSU in the NCAA Tournament semifinals to cap a successful 27-6 campaign in 2017. The Warriors return junior opposite **Stijn van Tilburg** and his 4.25 kills per set average – No. 3 in the NCAA – and senior libero **Larry Tuileta**. Both standouts earned AVCA All-American status – van Tilburg a first teamer and Tuileta on the second team.

Both squads seek a return trip to the NCAA Tournament, which will be held at UCLA's Pauley Pavilion in May.

CSUN and UC Irvine return an impact player on the front line as they aim to challenge for the top spot in the Big West. The Matadors boast senior opposite **Arvis Greene**, the program's first All-American since 2010. He was tabbed an AVCA honorable mention recipient after averaging 3.99 kills per set last season. The Anteater spotlight falls on 7-foot sophomore middle blocker **Scott Stadick**, another AVCA Honorable Mention All-American and a *Volleyball Mag.com* Freshman of the Year honoree. He ranked No. 5 in the nation in blocks (1.19 bpg) and No. 6 in hitting percentage.

UCI is No. 7 in the AVCA preseason poll while CSUN is No. 11, giving the Big West four teams in the top-15.

UC Santa Barbara brings back 6-7 middle blocker **Keenan Sanders**, a 2017 Freshman All-American by *Off the Block*. He ranked within the top-15 nationally with a .373 hitting percentage.

UC San Diego is led by senior outside hitter **Tanner Syftestad**, a *VolleyballMag.com* All-America honorable mention selection and the inaugural *Off the Block* Division II National Player of the Year. He hit .298 with 366 kills last season.

- 30 -

COACHES POLL RESULTS		
1.	Long Beach State (4)	34
2.	Hawai'i (2)	32
3.	CSUN	21
	UC Irvine	21
5.	UC Santa Barbara	10
6.	UC San Diego	8
() First-place votes		