



2017 Big West Softball

Big West Conference - 2 Corporate Park, Suite 206, Irvine, CA 92606

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Cal State Fullerton Preseason Favorite In Tight Race

IRVINE, Calif. – Cal State Fullerton was the preseason pick among the league's coaches for the Big West title, claiming the top spot in a tight race.

CSF claimed 57 points and four first place votes on its way to frontrunner status. The Titans are coming off a stellar 45-16 campaign, which included a 17-4 conference mark and their first Big West title since 2006. Reigning Big West Coach of the Year Kelly Ford has an experienced group that includes the return of four pitchers and 16 letterwinners to go along with seven newcomers. Leading the returnees in the field are senior Alexis Gonzalez (.325 BA, 9 HR, 45 RBI) and senior Delynn Rippey (.373 BA, 57 H, 5 3B, 14 SB), both of whom claimed first team All-Big West honors in 2016. In the circle, the Titans bring back sophomore Sydney Golden (18-6, 1.97 ERA, 73 SO), who claimed Big West Freshman Pitcher of the Year and first team All-Big West honors a year ago. The potent squad will face one of the most challenging schedules in the nation as Ole Miss, Texas Tech, Fresno State, Georgia, UCLA and Texas are among the teams the Titans will face this season.

Long Beach State was only two points behind the Titans with 55 to go along with three first place votes. The Beach finished third in the Big West standings a year ago with a 12-9 record, wrapping up the 2016 campaign with an overall mark of 32-23. The strength of the club is in the circle as two-time first team All-Big West selection senior Christina Clermont returns. Clermont was the workhorse of the staff, going 23-12 with a 2.37 ERA and a career-high 205 strikeouts in 230.1 innings of work. Offensively, junior Julia Lombardi is the top returnee as the second team All-Big West pick hit .310 with five homers, 10 doubles and 53 hits. The team also returns junior Lauren Lombardi who missed all but one game of 2016 due to injury. Lombardi was a first team All-Big West pick behind the plate in 2015, hitting .346 with 10 home runs, 52 RBI and a .987 fielding percentage. In all, LBSU returns seven starters and 18 letterwinners along with six newcomers in its quest for its first Big West title since 2014.

CSUN came in third in the preseason poll with 49 points. The club is in the midst of its most successful run in the Big West, having won 75 games over the last two years and a league title in 2015. The Matadors return a group that includes a 12-man senior class and three players who earned first team All-Big West honors in seniors Taylor Glover (.429 BA, 78 H, 39 R, 22 SB) and Daphne Pofek (19-8, 2.78 ERA, 102 K, 17 CG) and junior Savannah Horvath (.320 BA, 13 HR, 34 RBI, 23 SB). Glover was also the first CSUN player to earn NFCA All-America honors in over a decade and is already the all-time program DI leader in stolen bases (69) and triples (14). The team also has a former Big West Player of the Year on its roster as senior Katie Hooper returns. She ranks fifth in program history in RBI (123), tied for third in doubles (36) and tied for seventh in home runs (24). Head coach Tairia Flowers will lean on that experience as the club plays 21 games against 11 teams that reached the NCAA Tournament a year ago.

Fourth place belonged to Cal Poly with 40 points, who also claimed the final first place vote. Fifth place was Hawai'i with 30 points and in sixth was UC Santa Barbara with 27. UC Riverside (17) and UC Davis (13) wrapped up the 2017 edition of the preseason coaches poll.

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Coaches Poll Results

1.	Cal State Fullerton (4)	57
2.	Long Beach State (3)	55
3.	CSUN	49
4.	Cal Poly (1)	40
5.	Hawai'i	30
6.	UC Santa Barbara	27
7.	UC Riverside	17
8.	UC Davis	13

() First-place votes