



# 2012 Big West Baseball



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## 2012 Preseason Big West Coaches Poll - Tuesday, January 24, 2012

### Titans Top Big West Baseball Preseason Poll

Irvine, Calif. —The Cal State Fullerton Titans were selected as the favorite to capture the 2012 Big West Conference title according to the 2012 Big West Baseball Preseason Coaches Poll after receiving six of the nine first-place votes and totaling 76 points. Picking up three first-place votes was UC Irvine, who was selected second with 70 points. Rounding out the top three after collecting 58 points were the 49ers of Long Beach State.

Last season Cal State Fullerton claimed its 25th Big West Conference championship and ninth in the last 13 years after posting a 19-5 mark. Earning the league's automatic bid, the Titans made their 20th consecutive appearance in the NCAA Tournament, 33rd overall. Entering his first season as head coach of the Titans, Rick Vanderhook will guide a team that welcomes back 16 letterwinners, six of which are starting position players. Unfortunately the Titans lost all their starting pitchers in the offseason, which included All-Americans Nick Ramirez and Noe Ramirez, so they will rely on a young and inexperienced pitching squad. Dylan Floro (Jr. RHP, Merced, Calif.), one of just two returning pitchers from 2011, will lead the charge as the Friday-night starter. Cal State Fullerton is the lone Big West school represented in the current Top 25 preseason polls.

UC Irvine is coming off a season where the Anteaters posted their fourth 40-plus win season (43-18) in five years, finished second in the Big West with a 16-8 mark and advanced to the Super Regionals after earning an at-large berth into its sixth-straight NCAA Tournament. Head coach Mike Gillespie, entering his fifth season at the helm of the Anteaters' squad, returns three All-Big West honorees, including *American Baseball Coaches Association* Gold Glove catcher, Ronnie Shaeffer. Leading the pitching staff is junior Matt Whitehouse and senior Crosby Slaughter.

Third-place pick Long Beach State might be showcasing the most veteran Big West team this season as the 49ers welcome back 24 letterwinners, which includes seven starting position players and two starting pitchers from last year's team that finished fourth in the league standings with a 12-12 mark. Long Beach State, in its second year with skipper Troy Buckley, boasted a 29-27 overall mark after playing one of the strongest schedules in the country last year, ranking third overall and first in nonconference strength. The 49ers' faced a top-25 opponent in nearly half their contests, tallying a 10-18 record against the best in the nation. Key returnees this year are All-Big West Second Team selection shortstop Matt Duffy, right-handed pitcher Shawn Stuart, outfielder Brennan Metzger and designated hitter Ino Patron.

Earning the fourth spot on the preseason poll are the Cal Poly Mustangs, who finished last season in third place with a 15-9 record. During the 2011 season, the Mustangs rewrote the school Division I record book, including numerous pitching records -- lowest ERA (3.60), lowest opponents batting average (.254), fewest walks allowed (152), most strikeouts per nine innings (8.09) and fewest hits (443), runs (220) and earned runs allowed (184). Cal Poly is led by the most tenured current Big West coach, Larry Lee, who begins his 10th season at the helm of the Mustangs' baseball program. Over the past nine years he has accumulated a 273-233-2 overall mark and guided the Mustangs to six winning seasons. This year he leads a team that is highlighted by five starting position players and four starting pitchers. Included in the mix are second baseman Denver Chavez, outfielder Mitch Haniger, third baseman Evan Busby and pitcher Joey Wagman, Jr.

UC Riverside secured the fifth spot with 44 total points, followed by UC Santa Barbara in the sixth slot with 37 points. Pacific garnered 37 points to lock down the seventh spot, while UC Davis and Cal State Northridge were picked eighth and ninth, earning 23 and 18 points, respectively.

#### 2012 Coaches Poll Results

1.	Cal State Fullerton (6)	76
2.	UC Irvine (3)	70
3.	Long Beach State	58
4.	Cal Poly	54
5.	UC Riverside	44
6.	UC Santa Barbara	37
7.	Pacific	25
8.	UC Davis	23
9.	Cal State Northridge	18

( ) First-place vote

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