



2011-12 Big West Men's Basketball

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Media Tab Long Beach State Frontrunner To Win Men's Basketball Title

IRVINE, Calif. – Long Beach State was selected the favorite to claim the 2011-12 Big West men's basketball title in the annual preseason media poll released today.

Long Beach State collected 20 first-place votes from the 24-member voting panel for a total of 212 points. The 49ers welcome back four starters from the 2010-11 squad that finished 22-12 overall and won the Big West regular season title by four games with a 12-4 record. The 49ers are led by one of the nation's top talents in senior **Casper Ware**. The 5-10 guard became the first individual in Big West history to earn Player of the Year and Defensive Player of the Year honors in the same season. He averaged 17.2 points and 4.4 assists per game last season, adding Associated Press Honorable Mention All-America and NABC All-District 9 First Team to his list of accolades. Ware enters his senior season on the watch list for the John R. Wooden Award, bestowed upon the nation's top player, and is the Big West active career leader in assists (431), steals (159) and minutes played (3,173). He also ranks second among returning Big West players with 1,250 career points.

The 49ers pair Ware with three other senior starters in **Larry Anderson**, **T.J. Robinson** and **Eugene Phelps**. Anderson was selected to the All-Big West First Team for the second time in his career when he averaged 14.3 points and 6.3 rebounds per game as a junior. Anderson, who has scored 1,114 career points, ranks among the Big West active career leaders in scoring (5th), rebounds (440 - 5th), assists (270 - 2nd), steals (149 - 2nd) and field goals made (389 - 4th). Robinson, a 6-8 forward, anchors the 49er front line. He leads all Big West returnees with 1,310 points and has averaged double-digit rebounds in each of the last two seasons. Robinson ranked No. 2 in the league last year with 10.1 boards per game. With 861 career rebounds, Robinson is already No. 10 all-time in league history and needs 254 caroms to establish a new record and surpass the old mark of 1,115 by Cal State Fullerton's Tony Neal (1981-85). Phelps is a 6-6 forward who started all 34 games in 2010-11, averaging 9.7 points and 6.8 rebounds.

UC Santa Barbara has presented the biggest roadblock to Long Beach State in its quest to reach the NCAA Tournament. The Gauchos have knocked off the 49ers in the Big West Tournament championship game the last two seasons, earning the conference's automatic bid to the Big Dance. The Gauchos were picked to finish second in this year's media poll, receiving the four remaining first-place votes and 196 points. They concluded the 2010-11 campaign 18-14 overall. Four starters return, led by another Wooden Award candidate in senior **Orlando Johnson**. The 6-5 guard represented the United States during the World University Games this past summer and earned Big West Player of the Year recognition as a sophomore in 2009-10. Johnson has led the Big West in scoring for two straight seasons, including a whopping 21.1 points per game in 2010-11. He has scored 1,214 career points in just two seasons at UCSB, including a Gaucho single-season record of 674 points as a junior.

Johnson is surrounded by a wealth of talent, including senior **James Nunnally**. The 6-5 guard paired with Johnson to provide the Big West's most lethal one-two scoring punch in 2010-11. Nunnally ranked fifth in the Big West with 16.3 points per game and 12th in rebounds (5.7). Johnson and Nunnally combined for 1,194 points and 128 three-pointers as two of the conference's top marksmen. UCSB's drive for a third straight trip to the NCAA Tournament will also depend on contributions from senior **Jaimé Serna** (7.7 ppg, 4.3 rpg) and **Greg Somogyi**, a 7-3 center who enters his senior season as the Big West career active leader in blocked shots (136).

Cal Poly is a team on the rise in the Big West and the media agreed, placing the Mustangs third in the poll with 158 points. Cal Poly's 10 conference victories and second place finish matched program bests for a single-season, and its 15-15 overall mark represented a three-game improvement over the 2009-10 squad. Cal State Fullerton finished fourth in the poll with 131 points, followed by UC Riverside in fifth with 114 points. Pacific (91 points) in sixth, UC Davis (62 points) in seventh, Cal State Northridge (61 points) in eighth, and UC Irvine (55 points) in ninth finish out the poll.

The media panel also selected a six-player preseason all-conference team comprised of all seniors. Long Beach State had three representatives with **Larry Anderson**, **T.J. Robinson** and **Casper Ware**. UC Santa Barbara's **Orlando Johnson** and **James Nunnally** were selected, as was Cal Poly forward **David Hanson**.

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Media Poll Results

1.	Long Beach State (20)	212
2.	UC Santa Barbara (4)	196
3.	Cal Poly	158
4.	Cal State Fullerton	131
5.	UC Riverside	114
6.	Pacific	91
7.	UC Davis	62
8.	Cal State Northridge	61
9.	UC Irvine	55

() First-place votes

Preseason Media All-Conference Team

Name	School	Position	Year	Hometown
Larry Anderson	Long Beach State	Guard	Senior	Long Beach, Calif.
David Hanson	Cal Poly	Forward	Senior	Plymouth, Minn.
Orlando Johnson	UC Santa Barbara	Guard	Senior	Seaside, Calif.
James Nunnally	UC Santa Barbara	Guard	Senior	Stockton, Calif.
T.J. Robinson	Long Beach State	Forward	Senior	West Haven, Conn.
Casper Ware	Long Beach State	Guard	Senior	Cerritos, Calif.