



2011-12 Big West

Women's Basketball



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2011-12 Preseason Poll - Wednesday, October 19, 2011

Mustangs Tabbed To Repeat At Regular Season Champion

Irvine, Calif. – Cal Poly was selected to repeat as the Big West women's basketball regular season champion for the 2011-12 season, as voted on by the media in the Big West women's basketball preseason poll. The Mustangs collected 11 of the possible 24 first-place votes and 200 total points. The Mustangs were followed by the team they shared last year's title with, UC Santa Barbara, who mirrored Cal Poly with 11 first-place nods and totaled 191 points. Capturing two first-place votes and sitting third in this year's poll is last season's Big West tournament champion UC Davis, who registered 169 points.

Last season, Cal Poly found itself knotted for first place with UC Santa Barbara in the Big West standings with a 12-4 mark. This was the first women's basketball conference title for the Mustangs, who also earned its first-ever postseason appearance with a bid to the Women's NIT. The 2010-11 Big West Coach of the Year Faith Mimnaugh hopes to keep the momentum going this year as the Mustangs begin their quest for a second straight title. Cal Poly has the tough task of replacing 2010-11 Big West Women's Basketball Player of the Year Rachel Clancy, who concluded her four-year career with the Mustangs last season. Luckily for the Mustangs, they welcome back 2009-10 Big West Women's Basketball Player of the Year Kristina Santiago, who missed last season due to a torn ACL. During her junior campaign (2009-10), she led the conference in scoring (19.6) while ranking second in steals per game (2.41), total steals (70), rebounding (8.5) and field goal percentage (.547). She will be headlining a roster that showcases an even mix of veterans and fresh faces. Included in the mix are senior Abby Bloetscher, juniors Kayla Griffin and Caroline Reeves and sophomore Jonae Ervin.

The Gauchos, coming off a share of the Big West regular-season title, return much of their team including All-Big West First Team pick Emilie Johnson, Honorable Mention selection Sweets Underwood, All-Freshman Team choice Nicole Nesbit, as well as starters Kelsey Adrian and Angelei Aguirre. While Johnson is the Gauchos' top returner in scoring, Underwood will lead the way on the boards after finishing third in the league last year with a 6.9 rebound average. The Gauchos might have a lot of familiar faces on the roster, but the coaching staff had a changing of the guard in the offseason. Carlene Mitchell, who has spent the past 10 seasons at Rutgers with the previous three as associate head coach, was named UC Santa Barbara's new head women's basketball coach in the offseason to replace former head coach Lindsay Gottlieb, who left for a position at California. In the first head coaching job in a distinguished career on the sidelines, Mitchell inherits a Gaucho squad that has won 14 Big West regular-season titles in the past 16 years.

Like UC Santa Barbara, the Aggies of UC Davis also begin the 2011-12 season with a new, yet familiar, face as the head coach of the squad. Jennifer Gross, former associate head coach for the Aggies, begins her first season at the helm of the UC Davis' women's basketball program. Her promotion to head coach came after former head coach Sandy Simpson announced his retirement from coaching last season. Last year was a memorable one for UC Davis as the Aggies posted its second straight 20-win campaign and secured their first Big West Tournament championship and earned a first-ever berth into the NCAA D-I Women's Basketball Tournament. The Aggies face a tough challenge of filling the void of Paige Mintun, UC Davis' leading scorer and rebounder last season. Leading the charge for UC Davis this year is a trio of returning starters - Hana Asano, Samantha Meggison and Kasey Riecks. In 2009-10 they combined for nearly one-third of the Aggies' total points, while tallying a .368 field goal percentage. Meggison started all 33 contests and Asano and Riecks started 31 and 29, respectively.

Finishing fourth with a total of 120 points is the UC Riverside women's basketball program. In the offseason the Highlanders lost five players due to graduation, including four of its top five scorers, so look at 2011-12 to be a rebuilding year. However, UC Riverside is coming off a season where they finished third in the league with an 11-5 mark, posted an overall record of 19-13 and participated in their second WNIT event. This year's Highlanders squad will be led by junior Tre'Shonti Nottingham, who paced UC Riverside with 13.5 points per game last season, good enough for eighth in the league. The All-Big West First Team selection also finished in the top 10 in three-point field goal percentage with a .374 clip. Her .891 free throw percentage not only paced the Big West Conference, it ranked ninth in the country last season.

Garnering the fifth slot in the preseason poll with 107 points is Cal State Fullerton and UC Irvine earned the sixth spot after acquiring 91 points. The pair of Orange County schools were followed by Cal State Northridge (73), Pacific (66) and Long Beach State (63).

The media also voted on a six-player preseason all-conference team that included Abby Bloetscher (Cal Poly), Jasmine Erving (Cal State Northridge), Emilie Johnson (UC Santa Barbara), Tre'Shonti Nottingham (UC Riverside), Megan Richardson (Cal State Fullerton) and Kristina Santiago (Cal Poly).

Media Poll Results

1.	Cal Poly (11)	200
2.	UC Santa Barbara (11)	191
3.	UC Davis (2)	169
4.	UC Riverside	120
5.	Cal State Fullerton	107
6.	UC Irvine	91
7.	Cal State Northridge	73
8.	Pacific	66
9.	Long Beach State	63

() First-place votes

2011-12 Preseason All-Conference Team			
Name	School	Position	Yr.
Abby Bloetscher	Cal Poly	Post	Senior
Jasmine Erving	Cal State Northridge	Center	Senior
Emilie Johnson	UC Santa Barbara	Guard	Senior
Tre'Shonti Nottingham	UC Riverside	Guard	Junior
Megan Richardson	Cal State Fullerton	Guard	Senior
Kristina Santiago	Cal Poly	Forward	R-Senior

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