

# 2018 BIG WEST WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL



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## **Cal Poly Selected To Repeat As Big West Champion In 2018**

**Irvine, Calif.** – After capturing its first Big West title in 10 years, Cal Poly has been selected to repeat as the Big West Conference women's volleyball champion after claiming five first-place votes en route to a 77 point total, as voted on by the nine head coaches.

The University of Hawai'i secured the remaining four first-place votes to lock down the second spot with 75 points. UC Irvine followed in the third slot with 62 points, while Long Beach State registered 48 points to rank fourth and UC Santa Barbara was close behind in fifth place with 45 points. The Aggies of UC Davis nabbed 38 points for the sixth spot and was followed by CSUN (30), UC Riverside (18) and Cal State Fullerton (12).

The Mustangs are coming off a year where they posted the program's best overall record of 27-3, a perfect 16-0 Big West Conference mark and an undefeated home record for the first time since 2007. Led by 2017 AVCA Pacific North Coach of the Year Sam Crosson, Cal Poly broke the AVCA Top 25 and posted its first NCAA Tournament win since 2007. As a team, the Mustangs concluded 2017 ranked in the nation's Top 10 in kills per set (2nd - 15.07), assists (4th - 14.06), win/loss percentage (5th - .900) and hitting percentage (7th - .310).

They return four players who earned Big West postseason awards this past season in seniors Adlee Van Winden and Katherine Brouker, junior Torrey Van Winden and sophomore Madilyn Mercer. There are six new additions to the team, five true freshmen and one transfer from Duke, who will all be competing for playing time. Torrey Van Winden finished the season sixth in the nation in kills per set (4.72), second in the Big West. She was also named to the Pacific North AVCA All-Region First Team. Adlee Van Winden finished eighth in the Big West in kills per set (3.32). She also ranked seventh in service aces in the conference (.29 APS). Brouker will once again start at libero for the Mustangs. She led the team in digs with 407, fourth most in the Big West. One area that needs to be filled is the setter position after losing Taylor Nelson, who finished her career second all-time in assists in program history with 4,277.

In head coach Robyn Mow-Santos' rookie season at the helm of the Rainbow Wahine women's volleyball program, she led them to a 20-8 overall record and a 14-2 conference mark which advanced them to their 36th NCAA Tournament appearance. Hawai'i is on a quest to capture its fifth conference title in seven years and will rely on 2018 All-Big West First Teamers outside hitter McKenna Granato and setter Norene Iosia to lead the way. Granato paced the squad and finished fourth in the league last year with a 3.89 kills per set average, while Iosia placed fourth with a 9.95 assist average and fifth in service aces per set (.32).

Securing the third spot is UC Irvine, who finished third in the Big West a season ago with a 10-6 league mark and a 24-8 overall record, which tied the school record for wins, matching the 2009 squad that went 24-10. The Anteaters advanced to the quarterfinals of the National Invitational Volleyball Championship, falling to Texas Tech, 3-1. It was the first postseason appearance since 2004. The Anteaters welcome back 2018 All-Big West First Team members middle blocker Idara Akpakpa, outside hitter Haley DeSales and opposite Harlee Kekauoha. Last season Kekauoha became the 14th Anteater to eclipse the 1,000-kill mark and she currently ranks 13th in the UCI career records with 1,026. She also ranks fourth in aces (129) all-time. DeSales was second on the team and seventh in the conference last year with 355 kills, while Akpakpa paced the Anteaters and ranked sixth in the Big West with a .357 percentage.

The 2018 women's volleyball season gets underway Friday, August 24.

### **2018 Big West Women's Volleyball Preseason Coaches Poll**

|    |                     |    |
|----|---------------------|----|
| 1. | Cal Poly (5)        | 77 |
| 2. | Hawai'i (4)         | 75 |
| 3. | UC Irvine           | 62 |
| 4. | Long Beach State    | 48 |
| 5. | UC Santa Barbara    | 45 |
| 6. | UC Davis            | 38 |
| 7. | CSUN                | 30 |
| 8. | UC Riverside        | 18 |
| 9. | Cal State Fullerton | 12 |

( ) Denotes first place votes

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