



2014-15 Big West Men's Basketball

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

Contact: Mike Villamor (Assistant Commissioner - External Affairs)

Phone: (949) 261-2525 • Fax: (949) 261-2528 • email: mvillamor@bigwest.org

For Immediate Release - Thursday, October 23, 2014

UC Irvine Picked To Repeat As Men's Basketball Champion

IRVINE, Calif. – With four returning starters from last year's squad that captured the Big West regular season title and finished 23-12 overall, UC Irvine has been picked to repeat as the 2014-15 champion in the preseason media poll.

Coach Russell Turner's Anteaters received 20 of a possible 26 first-place votes for 221 points. Last year, UCI finished 13-3 in Big West play to secure the program's third regular season title, and the second outright, with the 23 total victories tying for second-most in history. Returning players include **Luke Nelson**, the 2013-14 Big West Freshman of the Year, who averaged a team-best 11.8 points per game and knocked down 74 three-pointers. Sophomore 7-6 center **Mamadou Ndiaye** earned the Big West Defensive Player of the Year award after setting a school and conference single-season record with 106 blocked shots last season. The Anteaters also will rely upon a pair of upperclassmen in senior **Will Davis II** and junior **Alex Young**. Davis II is UCI's career leader in blocked shots with 174, while Young's 305 assists rank No. 7 in school history.

UC Santa Barbara finished second in the poll with 195 points and garnered a pair of first-place votes. The Gauchos went 21-9 in 2013-14, representing the fifth 20-win season under head coach Bob Williams. Among four returning starters and 11 letterwinners, **Alan Williams** is the headliner as the reigning Big West Player of the Year. The senior forward led the conference in scoring (21.3 ppg) and the nation in rebounding (11.5 rpg) en route to Associated Press All-American and First Team All-District recognition. Backcourt mates **Michael Bryson** and **Zalmico Harmon** – a pair of honorable mention all-conference recipients – combined to average over 19 points per contest while Harmon ranked No. 2 nationally with a 4.6-to-1 assist-to-turnover ratio.

Long Beach State, which won the previous three Big West regular season championships prior to UC Irvine's ascension in 2013-14, finished third in the poll with 180 points and three first-place nods. The senior backcourt of **Mike Caffey** and **Tyler Lamb** will lead the charge in the program's quest to reclaim Big West supremacy. A two-time first team all-conference selection, Caffey will enter his final season in the black and gold 16th in school history with 1,114 points and ninth with 338 assists. Lamb's 15.4 points per game helped the 49ers finish 14-8 down the stretch last year in earning All-Big West Second Team accolades. A third returning starter, 6-7 forward **David Samuels**, averaged 6.1 points and 5.4 rebounds, as he joins forces on the frontline with 6-9 senior transfer (Florida Gulf Coast) **Eric McKnight**.

CSUN reached the Big West Tournament championship game under Reggie Theus in his first-year as head coach. Slotted for fourth place with 165 points with one first-place vote, the Matadors welcome back seniors **Stephen Maxwell** and **Stephan Hicks**. Maxwell captured first team all-league honors after averaging 17.5 points and 8.8 rebounds to rank fourth and second in the Big West, respectively. Hicks was No. 6 in scoring (17.2 ppg) and No. 7 in rebounding (6.8 rpg). The two have combined to amass career totals of 2,711 points and 1,337 rebounds in their three previous seasons. Hicks is 552 points shy of becoming just the seventh player in Big West history to reach the career 2,000 plateau.

Hawai'i placed fifth in the poll with 119 points. The Rainbow Warriors return All-Big West First Team member junior **Isaac Fotu**. **Cal Poly**, which last season became the first No. 7 seed to win the Big West Tournament championship, and went on to earn an NCAA Tournament first round victory, was sixth in the poll with 109 points. Rounding out the votes was **UC Davis** in seventh (79 points), **Cal State Fullerton** eighth (64) and **UC Riverside** ninth (38).

The media panel also selected a six-player preseason all-conference team comprised of four seniors, one junior and one sophomore from six different institutions – Long Beach State's **Mike Caffey**, **Isaac Fotu** of Hawai'i, **Corey Hawkins** of UC Davis, CSUN's **Stephen Maxwell**, UC Irvine's **Mamadou Ndiaye** and **Alan Williams** of UC Santa Barbara. Caffey, Fotu, Maxwell and Williams made the All-Big West First Team in 2013-14.

- 30 -

Media Poll Results

1.	UC Irvine (20)	221
2.	UC Santa Barbara (2)	195
3.	Long Beach State (3)	180
4.	CSUN (1)	165
5.	Hawai'i	119
6.	Cal Poly	109
7.	UC Davis	79
8.	Cal State Fullerton	64
9.	UC Riverside	38

() First-place votes

Media Preseason All-Conference Team

Name	School	Pos.	Yr.	Hometown
Mike Caffey	Long Beach State	G	Sr.	Corona, Calif.
Isaac Fotu	Hawai'i	F	Jr.	Torban, Auckland, New Zealand
Corey Hawkins	UC Davis	G	Sr.	Goodyear, Ariz.
Stephen Maxwell	CSUN	F	Sr.	Woodland Hills, Calif.
Mamadou Ndiaye	UC Irvine	C	So.	Dakar, Senegal
Alan Williams	UC Santa Barbara	C	Sr.	Phoenix, Ariz.