



2016-17 Big West Men's Basketball

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

Contact: Mike Villamor (Assistant Commissioner - Communications)

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

For Immediate Release - Wednesday, October 26, 2016

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

IRVINE, Calif. – Long Beach State is the favorite to capture the 2016-17 Big West men's basketball regular season championship, according to a 23-member media panel who also voted on a seven-player preseason all-conference team.

Head coach **Dan Monson's** 49ers, which return three starters and eight letterwinners from last year's 20-15 club, collected 19 first-place votes for 203 points. Long Beach State reassumed the favorite's role for the first time since the 2012-13 season. UC Irvine earned 158 points with one first-place vote to finish second in the poll. With 155 points and two first-place nods, CSUN came in third place followed closely behind by UC Santa Barbara in fourth (147). UC Davis was fifth with 88 points and Cal State Fullerton finished sixth with 83. UC Riverside (76), Hawai'i (73) and Cal Poly (52) rounded out the poll. The Rainbow Warriors grabbed the one remaining first-place vote.

In addition to recording a 20-win season, **Long Beach State** finished 12-4 for third place in the Big West and qualified for the National Invitation Tournament for the eighth time in program history. The 49ers return All-Big West Second Team selection **Justin Bibbins**. The junior point guard handed out 164 assists for the third-highest single-season total in school history. Junior **Gabe Levin** is another returning starter. The 6-7 forward earned honorable mention all-conference after averaging 9.5 points and 6.1 rebounds per game.

Coming off a school record 28-win season, **UC Irvine** claimed a share of last year's regular season title, the program's second in three years. The Anteaters welcome back senior **Luke Nelson**, a Big West Player of the Year candidate. The 6-3 guard led UCI in scoring last season with 13.7 points per game and landed a spot on the All-Big West First Team. He is the conference's active career leader in points (1,226), assists (361) and steals (115). UCI has compiled four straight 20-win seasons for a total of 93 victories over that span.

CSUN trots out a full roster for the first time in the fourth year of the **Reggie Theus** era. The third place prediction is the highest for the Matadors under Theus. Junior guard **Kendall Smith** headlines a returning group of three starters and seven letterwinners. He averaged 15.3 points in 21 games. Senior **Aaron Parks** (13.3 ppg) and junior **Micheal Warren** (12.7 ppg) give the Matadors scoring depth. In addition, the program welcomes in Division I transfers **Rakim Lubin** (Connecticut), **Darin Johnson** (Washington), **Reggie Theus Jr.** (South Carolina) and **Dylan Johns** (Texas A&M).

Bob Williams enters his 19th season at **UC Santa Barbara** as just the third head coach in Big West history to accumulate 300 wins. The Gauchos posted a 19-14 record last year and participated in the inaugural Vegas 16 postseason tournament. UCSB is led this season by a talented backcourt in junior **Gabe Vincent** and senior **Eric Childress**. Vincent averaged 14.1 points per game and hit 80 three-pointers, the second most in school history. Childress knocked down a career-best 32 threes and averaged a team-high 4.3 assists per game. Both players were named honorable mention all-conference.

The seven players the media selected to the preseason all-conference team consisted of one sophomore, four juniors and two seniors. Cal State Fullerton had two players named to the list in sophomore **Khalil Ahmad** and senior **Tre' Coggins**. LBSU also featured a pair of honorees in Bibbins and Levin. In addition, CSUN's Smith, UCI's Nelson and UCSB's Vincent all received preseason recognition from the panel.

- 30 -

Media Poll Results

1.	Long Beach State (19)	203
2.	UC Irvine (1)	158
3.	CSUN (2)	155
4.	UC Santa Barbara	147
5.	UC Davis	88
6.	Cal State Fullerton	83
7.	UC Riverside	76
8.	Hawai'i (1)	73
9.	Cal Poly	52

() First-place votes

Media Preseason All-Conference Team

Name	School	Pos.	Yr.	Hometown
Khalil Ahmad	Cal State Fullerton	G	So.	Corona, Calif.
Justin Bibbins	Long Beach State	G	Jr.	Carson, Calif.
Tre' Coggins	Cal State Fullerton	G	Sr.	San Juan Capistrano, Calif.
Gabe Levin	Long Beach State	F	Jr.	Oak Park, Ill.
Luke Nelson	UC Irvine	G	Sr.	Worthing, England
Kendall Smith	CSUN	G	Jr.	Antioch, Calif.
Gabe Vincent	UC Santa Barbara	G	Jr.	Stockton, Calif.