



2018 BIG WEST MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

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TJ DeFalco Becomes Big West's First Player of the Year

Big West Announces Inaugural Men's Volleyball All-Conference Team

IRVINE, CA – Big West regular season champion Long Beach State secured two major awards to underline the announcement of the inaugural men's volleyball all-conference team today, as voted on by the six head coaches. **TJ DeFalco** earned 2018 Big West Player of the Year recognition while Beach bench boss **Alan Knipe** claimed Coach of the Year honors. UC Irvine's **Joel Schneidmiller** collected the third chief award, being named the conference's Freshman of the Year.

DeFalco led a high powered Long Beach State machine in the regular season as Player of the Year. The 6-foot-4 outside hitter led the squad in kills (315) and aces (43) while ranking second in digs (163) and fourth in total blocks (54). On the Big West leaderboard, he ranked fifth in kills per set (3.66), fourth in kills, second in hitting percentage (.383) and first in service aces per set (0.50). He had four double-doubles and tallied 20-plus kills four times, including a season-high 25 at No. 6 Hawai'i in the regular season finale. The Huntington Beach, Calif. native hit .400 or better in a match on 12 occasions. During back-to-back victories in February over No. 2 UCLA, DeFalco hit a .combined .463 with 40 kills (5.00 kpg) in cementing a No. 1 national ranking the Beach maintained throughout the season. His 17 kills and 12 digs against the Bruins on Feb. 17 led to his selection as Sports Imports/AVCA Division I-II Player of the Week. DeFalco, who became just the 21st player in LBSU men's volleyball history to record 1,000 career kills earlier in the season, also collected two Big West Player of the Week citations in addition to two Defensive Player of the Week nods.

Knipe, in his 15th season at LBSU, oversaw a dominant program throughout the course of the 2018 regular season. The Beach set a school record with 24 straight victories, utilizing the program's best ever start (24-0) to remain entrenched at No. 1 in the country for 13 straight weeks. While Hawai'i derailed LBSU's bid to finish the regular season unblemished, the Beach still won the inaugural Big West title with a commanding 9-1 record and laid claim to the No. 1 seed in the upcoming conference tournament prior to the final week's matches. Knipe's squad has won 12 contests against teams ranked in the AVCA Top-15, including series victories over No. 2 UCLA and No. 4 UC Irvine. Under Knipe's guidance this season, the Beach has recorded a staggering 74-12 won-loss record in total sets. In one stretch, LBSU did not drop a set in nine consecutive matches. Knipe also reached a personal milestone as he notched his 300th career victory on Apr. 6 at UC San Diego. His team has notched 17 three-set sweeps this year – three shy of the program record for most in a single season.

In earning the distinction as the Big West's top freshman, **Schneidmiller** played a key role in establishing UC Irvine as one of the nation's top programs in 2018. A starter in 24-of-27 contests, the 6-foot-6 outside hitter ranked third on the club with 245 kills, second with 15 aces, fifth with 83 digs and fourth in blocks with 63. Schneidmiller also posted the conference's seventh-best hitting percentage (.328) while ranking No. 12 in kills per set (2.63). The Saratoga, Calif. native impacted the Anteaters early on in back-to-back wins over No. 5 BYU. He hit a combined .482 and averaged 3.78 kills per set against the Cougars to help UCI get off to an eventual 10-1 start. Schneidmiller's performances against BYU resulted in Big West Player of the Week and Sports Imports/AVCA Division I Player of the Week accolades. He also earned Big West Freshman Player of the Week recognition four times in a five-week period. Schneidmiller recorded double-digit kills in 12 matches.

The 16-member All-Big West First Team featured representation from at least one player on all six conference squads. Long Beach State and Hawai'i led the way with four players apiece, while UC Irvine and CSUN each had three. UC San Diego and UC Santa Barbara also placed a representative on the first team. Twelve of the 16 members of the first team have remaining eligibility.

In addition, all six schools had representation on a seven-man All-Freshman Team.

The complete 2018 Big West men's volleyball all-conference team may be viewed on the following page.

2018 BIG WEST MEN'S VOLLEYBALL ALL-CONFERENCE TEAM

FIRST TEAM

<u>Player</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Yr.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Hometown</u>
Nick Amado	Long Beach State	6-6	Jr.	Middle Blocker	Aliso Niguel, Calif.
Karl Apfelbach	UC Irvine	6-8	Jr.	Opposite	Shorewood, Wisc.
Eric Chance	CSUN	6-8	Jr.	Middle Blocker	Redondo Beach, Calif.
Corey Chavers	UC Santa Barbara	6-4	Jr.	Outside Hitter	Downey, Calif.
TJ DeFalco	Long Beach State	6-4	Jr.	Outside Hitter	Huntington Beach, Calif.
Kyle Ensing	Long Beach State	6-7	Jr.	Opposite	Valencia, Calif.
Patrick Gasman	Hawai'i	6-10	So.	Middle Blocker	Clovis, Calif.
Arvis Greene	CSUN	6-7	Sr.	Opposite	Los Angeles, Calif.
Dimitar Kalchev	CSUN	6-4	Jr.	Outside Hitter	Kardzhali, Bulgaria
Aaron Koubi	UC Irvine	6-5	Sr.	Outside Hitter	Cannes, France
Scott Stadick	UC Irvine	7-0	So.	Middle Blocker	Watertown, Wisc.
Tanner Syftestad	UC San Diego	6-8	Sr.	Opposite	Sacramento, Calif.
Josh Tuaniga	Long Beach State	6-3	Jr.	Setter	Long Beach, Calif.
Larry Tuileta	Hawai'i	6-2	Sr.	Libero	Honolulu, O'ahu, Hawai'i
Stijn van Tilburg	Hawai'i	6-8	Jr.	Outside Hitter	Amsterdam, Netherlands
Joe Worsley	Hawai'i	6-0	Jr.	Setter	Moraga, Calif.

HONORABLE MENTION

<u>Player</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Yr.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Hometown</u>
Simon Anderson	Long Beach State	6-8	Fr.	Middle Blocker	Middelfart, Denmark
Josiah Byers	CSUN	6-9	Sr.	Middle Blocker	Sacramento, CA
Dante Chakravorti	UC Irvine	6-4	Jr.	Setter	Glencoe, Ill.
Connor Drake	UC Santa Barbara	6-8	Jr.	Middle Blocker	Granite Bay, Calif.
Bjarne Huus	Long Beach State	6-1	Sr.	Outside Hitter	Foerde, Norway
Rado Parapunov	Hawai'i	6-9	So.	Opposite	Sofia, Bulgaria
David Parker	UC Irvine	6-1	Sr.	Libero	Rocklin, Calif.
Keenan Sanders	UC Santa Barbara	6-6	So.	Opposite	San Diego, Calif.

ALL-FRESHMAN TEAM

<u>Player</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Hometown</u>
Simon Anderson	Long Beach State	6-8	Middle Blocker	Middelfart, Denmark
Wyatt Harrison	UC San Diego	6-4	Outside Hitter	Kilauea, Hawai'i
Maciej Ptaszynski	CSUN	6-6	Outside Hitter	Gdansk, Poland
Joel Schneidmiller	UC Irvine	6-6	Outside Hitter	Saratoga, Calif.
Jack Truman	UC Santa Barbara	6-11	Middle Blocker	Redondo Beach, Calif.
Austin Wilmot	UC Irvine	6-9	Middle Blocker	Valley Village, Calif.
Gage Worsley	Hawai'i	6-1	Defensive Specialist	Moraga, Calif.

2018 BIG WEST PLAYER OF THE YEAR

TJ DeFalco, Long Beach State

2018 BIG WEST FRESHMAN OF THE YEAR

Joel Schneidmiller, UC Irvine

2018 BIG WEST COACH OF THE YEAR

Alan Knipe, Long Beach State