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WEBER STATE SELECTED FIRST IN PRESEASON POLLS

OGDEN, Utah (Oct. 17, 2013) - Randy Rahe's Weber State Wildcats have been selected first by the media and coaches in the 2013-14 Big Sky Conference men's basketball preseason polls.

Weber State, which is coming off a school-record 30 win season and a second-place finish in the College Insider.com Tournament, earned 31 of the 34 first-place votes from the media and a total of 370 points. Weber State was a unanimous first-place selection in the coaches' poll, earning 10 first-place votes and 100 total points. Coaches were not allowed to vote for their own team.

"It's nice to know that some of the people in our league think we have a chance to be a pretty good basketball team," said Rahe, who has compiled a 150-75 record in seven seasons. "We're so far away from that right now, and being at that level is hard to comprehend. We have so much work to do, and so many young players trying to get in the fold. Time will tell, but I think we have some nice pieces."

Two-time defending Big Sky champion Montana was selected second by the media and third by the coaches. Montana received one first-place vote in the coaches' poll and 84 total points. In the media poll, the Grizzlies received three first-place votes and 322 total points.

North Dakota, which enters its second season in the Big Sky, was tabbed second by the coaches and third by the media. Brian Jones' club finished 12-8 in conference and advanced to the semifinals of the Big Sky Championship. UND earned 86 points in the coaches' poll, and 308 in the media poll.

Northern Colorado was selected fourth in both polls. Montana State was tabbed fifth by the media and sixth by the coaches. Eastern Washington was selected fifth by the coaches and sixth by the media.

Weber State went 14-2 in conference in 2011-12 and 18-2 last season, finishing second to Montana both seasons. The Wildcats fell in the Big Sky Championship game both years to the Grizzlies.

The Wildcats return senior guard/forward Davion Berry, a First Team All-Big Sky pick and the Newcomer of the Year last season. Berry averaged a team-high 15.2 points per game, which ranked fifth in the league. The Wildcats also return senior center Kyle Tresnak, who averaged 11.8 points and 5.5 rebounds per game en route to Second Team All-Conference honors.

Senior point guard Jordan Richardson also returns to the lineup, and sophomore forward Joel Bolomboy is one of the league's rising stars.

Weber State won a Big Sky single-season record 30 games last season, falling to East Carolina in the championship of the CIT. All-Conference guard. The Wildcats lost starters Scott Bamforth and Frank Otis.

Montana, which has played in four straight Big Sky Championship games and posted four consecutive 20-win seasons, returns reigning Big Sky MVP Kareem Jamar. The senior guard/forward averaged 14.2 points, 5.9 rebounds and 4.0 assists per game last season.

PRESEASON POLLS

Media Poll

1. Weber State (31)	370
2. Montana (3)	322
3. North Dakota	308
4. Northern Colorado	251
5. Montana State	220
6. Eastern Washington	188
7. Northern Arizona	161
8. Sacramento State	140
9. Portland State	116
10. Southern Utah	92
11. Idaho State	65

Coaches' Poll

1. Weber State (10)	100
2. North Dakota	86
3. Montana (1)	84
4. Northern Colorado	77
5. Eastern Washington	55
6. Montana State	54
7. Sacramento State	39
8. Portland State	38
9. Northern Arizona	32
10. Idaho State	22
11. Southern Utah	18

The Grizzlies lost All-Conference guard Will Cherry and senior All-Conference center Mathias Ward to graduation. Junior guard Jordan Gregory, an Honorable Mention All-Conference last season, returns to the starting lineup, along with senior center Eric Hutchison.

The Grizzlies won a Big Sky single-season record 19 conference games last season with just one loss. Over the past two seasons, UM has won 34 of 36 conference games.

North Dakota is led by senior First Team All-Conference guard Troy Huff, who led the league in scoring with an average of 19.2 points per game and led the league in steals with an average of 2.4 per game. North Dakota returns three other starters, including guards Aaron Anderson and Jamal Webb. Anderson earned Second Team All-Conference honors last season and netted 13.3 points per game. Webb was second in the league in steals and third in assists.

B.J. Hill enters his fourth season as the head coach at Northern Colorado. The Bears return First Team All-Conference forward Derrick Barden, who averaged 13.5 points and 8.8 rebounds per game. Guards Tate Unruh and Tevin Svihovec return to the starting lineup. Unruh averaged 13.5 points per game and shot .428 percent from 3-point range. Svihovec averaged 11.9 points and 3.2 assists.

Montana State, under the direction of eighth-year coach Brad Huse, will be led by senior forward Flavien Davis and senior guard Antonio Biglow. MSU has qualified for the Big Sky Championship every season under Huse.

Eastern Washington, coached by Jim Hayford, hopes to return to the seven-team Big Sky Championship after missing out last season. The Eagles return four starters, including sophomore forward Venky Jois. The 6-foot-7 Jois averaged 12.3 points per game, and led the league in rebounding (9.0 per game) and blocked shots (2.4 per game) en route to being selected the Freshman of the Year.

"Last year we went 18-2 and it's hard to fathom we didn't win it," Rahe said. "That's a credit to Montana. This year, I think there a lot of teams in the league that could win it. We lost some guys. Montana lost some guys. North Dakota returns basically its whole team. They could potentially start five seniors. They were playing good basketball at the end of that year. Northern Colorado has a lot of experience."

Northern Arizona, Sacramento State, Portland State, Southern Utah and Idaho State rounded out the media poll. Sacramento State was tabbed seventh in the coaches' poll, followed by Portland State, Northern Arizona, Idaho State and Southern Utah.

The 2013-14 regular season begins on Friday, Nov. 8. The 2014 Big Sky Championship is slated for March 13-15 at the site of the regular-season champion. Conference teams will play 20 league games in a true double round-robin format.