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IDAHO STATE, PORTLAND STATE FAVORED IN PRESEASON POLL

Ogden, Utah (August 7, 2013) – The Big Sky soccer coaches have chosen Idaho State and Portland State as favorites to win the 2013 championship.

Coaches were not allowed to vote for their own team in the preseason poll, which was released Wednesday by the league office.

Idaho State and Portland State were picked to finish first with 68 points each. Idaho State received four first-place votes and Portland State received one first-place vote. After going 6-2-1 in conference last year, Idaho State was a co-regular season Big Sky champion, sharing the title with Portland State and Montana. Idaho State hosted the 2012 conference championship and defeated Weber State and Montana in penalty kicks to advance to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since the 2006 season. Idaho State lost in the first round to Stanford 3-0. Head coach Allison Gibson is the reigning Big Sky Conference coach of the year. The Bengals return seven starters including the 2012 co-Offensive MVP Amanda Ellsworth and the championship MVP, Sheridan Hapsic.

The Vikings were co-regular season champions with Idaho State and Montana, after finishing 6-2-1 in conference. It was the team's fourth Big Sky co-regular season championship. Portland State fell short of winning its first Big Sky conference championship title after losing to Montana in the semifinals 3-2. Portland State returns six starters and 19 letterwinners from the 2012 squad. Head coach Laura Schott has been the PSU coach since 2008. Under Schott's reign the Vikings haven't lost more than two conference games in a single season. Schott was named co-Big Sky coach of the year in 2009.

Montana was picked to finish third with two first-place votes and 65 total points, just three points shy of first. After finishing 6-2-1 in 2012, Montana was a co-regular season Big Sky champion along with Idaho State and Portland State. Under second-year head coach Mark Plakorus, the Grizzlies have appeared in the past two conference championships. Montana won the championship in 2011 and lost in the final in 2012 to Idaho State. The Grizzlies will be returning six starters and lost five starters. Among the starters lost are the 2012 Big Sky co-Offensive MVP Erin Craig and the 2012 Defensive MVP Lauren Costa.

Weber State was picked to finish fourth with two first-place votes and 58 total points. Weber State finished the 2012 season fourth overall with a 5-3-1 conference record. The Wildcats advanced to the Big Sky Conference tournament in 2012 for its second consecutive year. WSU fell in the semifinals in a shootout to Idaho State. The Wildcats return 10 starters from the 2012 squad including the Big Sky newcomer of the year, Chansi Crompton.

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Northern Colorado was picked to finish fifth with 57 points. NC finished 4-2-3 in conference in 2012 and were just one point shy of making the tournament. The Bears return seven starters including the 2012 Goalkeeper of the Year Natalie D'Adamio and a first-team All-Big Sky defender Adrienne Jordan.

Northern Arizona finished sixth with one first-place vote and a total of 43 points. Northern Arizona finished fifth last year with a 2-2-3 conference record. The Lumberjacks are looking to return to the conference tournament for the first time since 2010.

Sacramento State was picked seventh with 37 points. The Hornets finished the 2012 season with a 3-4-2 conference record and is returning 16 letterwinners including five starters.

Eastern Washington finished eighth with 28 points. The Eagles finished the 2012 season with a 3-3-3 conference record and is returning eight starters including two second-team All-Big Sky players, Cassie Black and Brianna Brannan.

Rounding out the poll are Southern Utah and North Dakota. Southern Utah was picked ninth with 16 points, and North Dakota finished 10th with 10 points. Southern Utah earned its first Big Sky win in a 3-0 win over North Dakota and finished the 2012 season with a 1-7-1 conference record. North Dakota is still looking for its first Big Sky win as it finished 0-9 in 2012.

The first regular season matches start August 23rd, with the first conference matches starting Sept. 26th. At the end of the conference season, the top four teams will advance to the Big Sky Championship.

Preseason Soccer Poll		
Team		Points
T1. Idaho State		68 (4)
T1. Portland State		68 (1)
3. Montana		65 (2)
4. Weber State		58 (2)
5. Northern Colorado		57
6. Northern Arizona		43 (1)
7. Sacramento State		37
8. Eastern Washington		28
9. Southern Utah		16
10. North Dakota		10

(Number of first place votes in parentheses)