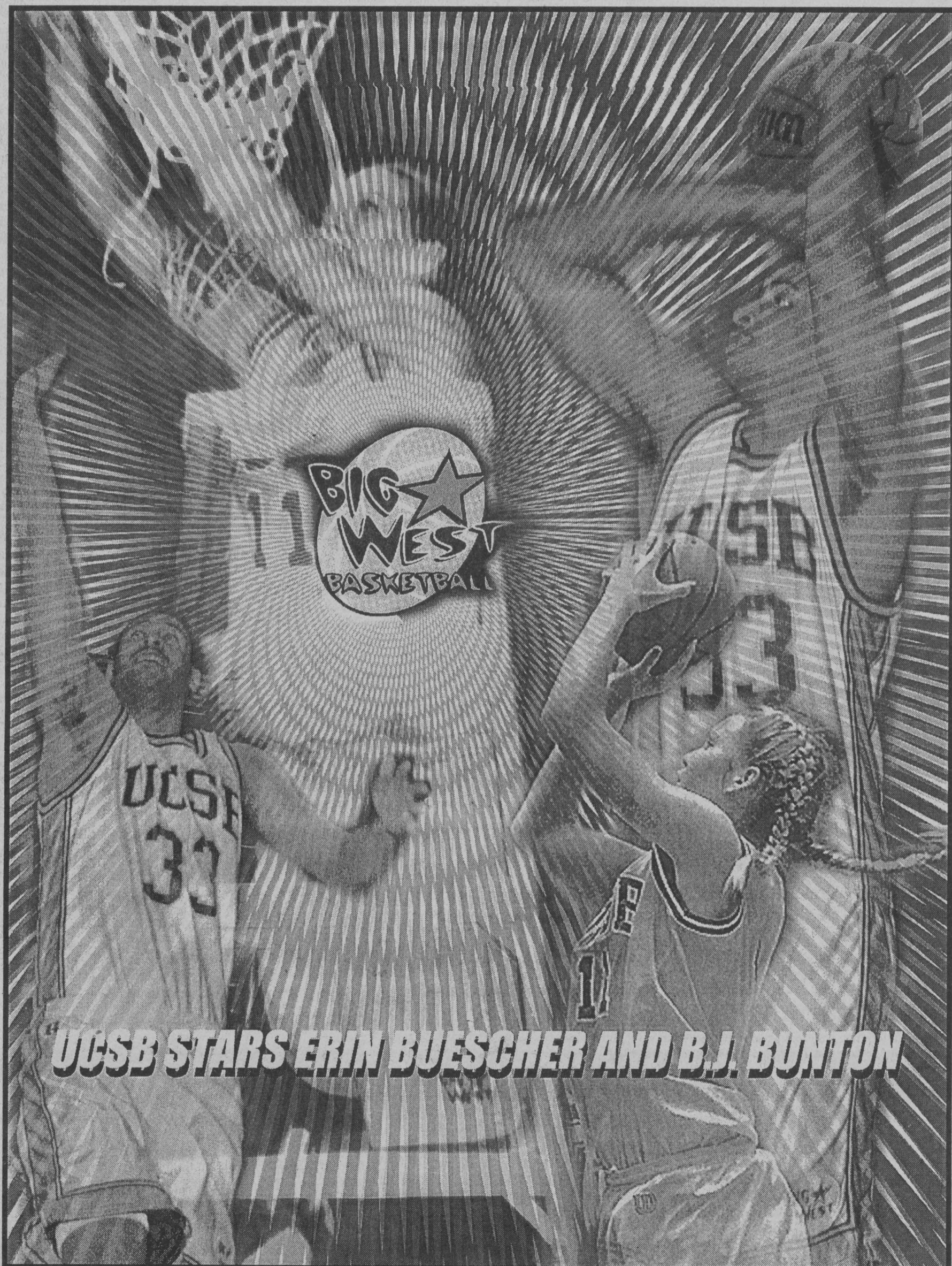


## **Guide to the 1998-99**

# **Big West Conference**

**Men's and Women's Team-by-Team Analysis**

**Photo Illustration J.E. Anderson**



# Big West Conference Western Division - Men

## Cal Poly SLO

BY SCOTT HENNESSEE  
Staff Writer

It's tough to believe that after only four years of competing at the Division I level, the Cal Poly Mustangs are the favorites to win the Big West Conference, but that's the position fourth-year Head Coach Jeff Schneider has landed for his team entering the season.

Both the Big West coaches and the media who cover the conference have tabbed the Mustangs to finish atop the Western Division, and rightfully so. Cal Poly returns all five starters from a team who finished 14-14 overall, and 7-9 in conference, second only to University of the Pacific.

The Mustangs' high-octane offense, led by guard Mike Wozniak and forward Chris Bjorklund, averaged 84.5 points per game, ranking them ninth in the nation.

"We were pleased to win 14 games last year and to be ninth in the country in scoring," Schneider said. "Our guys are now much bigger so

we will be better rebounding. Rebounding will be the key to our success."

With the renovation of the dilapidated Mott Gymnasium, and the opportunity for the Mustangs to advance to the postseason (Cal Poly had been ineligible to participate in the postseason because of their recent jump to Division I), the Mott Maniacs are bracing themselves for a big year.

Entering his junior season, Wozniak will be counted on to produce offensively. Considered to be one of the best shooters on the West Coast, Wozniak averaged 20.3 ppg a year ago.

At 6 feet 9 inches, sophomore Chris Bjorklund returns as one of the best post players in the Big West. His average of 17.3 points per game earned him Freshman of the Year honors in 1997-98. Guards Watende Favors and Jabbar Washington return for their sophomore seasons after averaging 10 and 8.8 ppg as freshmen. The Mustangs' point guard senior Ben Larson averaged 7.2 ppg and 4.8 assists.

## Long Beach State

BY STEVE WENDT  
Staff Writer

The Long Beach State basketball program will rely on a couple of key returners and an infusion of new blood in order to make its run at March's Big West Conference Tournament in Reno.

Last season, the Beach mustered only a 10-19 overall record, 5-11 in the Big West. LBSU did this with no true point guard, however.

That fact has been remedied this season. Long Beach State Head Coach Wayne Morgan will look for junior college transfer Charles O'Neal and senior Tommie Davis to bring the ball up the court for Long Beach. O'Neal scored 10.7 points per game and 5.6 assists per game at Florida Community College in Jacksonville. Davis returns to the 49ers after sitting out last year. He averaged 7.0 ppg and 5.2 apg in 1996-97.

Last season's point guard, Antrone Lee (11.7 ppg, 4.1 rpg) returns as well, but the 6-foot-7-inch junior will return to his natural forward position.

"Antrone Lee will be able to play the one, two or three position for us this year," Morgan said. "Tommie Davis is going to participate for us this year. He is very quick and very fast and should help us."

Morgan, who was Syracuse's top recruiter in his 12 years on Jim Boheim's staff, brought in two new players that should make an impact. Six-foot-eleven-inch Mate Milisa, a transfer from Pensacola JC, will see frontcourt action while 6-foot-4-inch Ramel Lloyd will be one of the premier shooting guards in the conference. Lloyd, a sophomore, transferred from Syracuse where he averaged 4.6 ppg.

"Ramel has worked extremely hard to become the best player he can be," Morgan said. "I believe he will emerge as one of the top three players in the Big West."

## Pacific

BY STEVE WENDT  
Staff Writer

The University of the Pacific is one of the Big West's biggest enigmas this season. The Tigers have lost four of their top five scorers from last season, including the #1 pick in the NBA Draft 7-foot-1-inch Michael Olowokandi. Pacific, however, has a bumper crop of recruits with size as their greatest asset.

UOP Head Coach Bob Thomason returns for his 11th season at the helm in Stockton with a team that has 11 new faces.

The only returner that made any impact for last year's Big West Western Division Champions (23-10 overall) was 6-foot-7-inch forward Jason Williams. The senior averaged 8.7 points per game and 5.1 rebounds per game. Senior point guard (and coach's son) Scott Thomason averaged 8.7 minutes of action per game.

"Jason probably has the most ability on our team as far as natural ability," Tho-

mason said. "He can jump, he's quick, he can handle the ball and he's a good shooter."

The Tigers will rely on sharp shooting and sheer size to compete this year.

"We have a good shooting team; it's the best shooting team I have ever coached," Thomason said. "The question is, 'can they get open to shoot?' We shoot pretty good, but we are slow. I think overall team size is one of our strengths. We're going to have bodies out there that are pretty strong."

With a front line that averages 6 feet 7 inches, the Tigers should be ferocious indeed.

UOP's recruiting class includes forward Mike Hahn. The 6-foot-7-inch freshman was the Nebraska Player of the Year as a prepster and led his high school to four state championships.

"[Hahn] has long arms, he's a good rebounder, good passer, unselfish and can score inside and shoot outside a little," Thomason said. "I expect big things from him."

## UC Santa Barbara

BY MATT HURST  
Staff Writer

Having a National Championship coach at the helm of your basketball program is a good sign that a school wants to change its image. This school does.

Hiring Division II Coach of the Year Bob Williams, fresh off a Division II National Championship with UC Davis, was great for UCSB, seeking to avoid its slide into basketball mediocrity.

"I want us to compete in every half of basketball we play," Williams said. "We must progress from week to week in grasping the team concepts offensively and defensively so we will contend in January and February."

With six returners from last year, including two starters, the Gauchos are poised to make a run to be able to play in March. The addition of six new players will help UCSB bring back the glory once found in the Thunderdome.

Junior transfer Erick Ashe has been key for the Gauchos thus far, earning a spot in the starting lineup. Junior guard Derrick Allen has found his place among the five starters with tenacious defense. Backing up Allen is junior Larry Bell who helped lead Compton College to a California State Junior College Championship. Also new is sophomore Adama Ndiaye. This Dakar, Senegal, native has a 7-foot-3-inch wingspan and will be key once he learns Williams' system.

Senior B.J. Bunton and sophomore Brandon Payton will be instrumental in scoring for the Gauchos. Bunton will work on the inside where he averaged 10.8 points per game last year and 6.2 rebounds. Payton expects to be a prolific scorer and comes back to UCSB with 7.9 ppg and 2.3 assists per game. Also returning is senior Josh Merrill (6.7 ppg, 3.7 rpg). Merrill had a double-double in the team's first game with 10 points and 10 boards.

"I am pleasantly surprised at this group's eagerness to do what we ask them," Williams said. "The best thing is that they really want to improve and make positive progress."

## UC Irvine

BY SCOTT HENNESSEE  
Staff Writer

A coach coming off of a Division II National Championship takes over a struggling program and brings it back to respectability. What UCSB fans are hoping Bob Williams can do this season, UC Irvine's Pat Douglas has already done.

Douglas took over as the Anteaters' head coach last year after winning a Division II national title with Cal State Bakersfield in 1996-1997, and improved UCI's record by eight games. The Anteaters went from 1-25 to 9-18 and a third place finish in the Big West's Western Division. All of the players from two years ago are now gone, and Douglas has only his recruits in the program, which could be bad news for opponents.

"We are very young, but more talented," Douglas said. "Our system has changed a little bit. We are much stronger. We've been in the weight room for six months. We are going to emphasize defense. We think we can do things at

this level that I didn't feel we could do previously. We are going to have an outstanding program."

Junior forward Adam Stetson is UCI's top returning scorer and rebounder, having averaged 12.1 points and four boards per game last season. Six-foot-seven-inch Ben Jones played well enough to be named to the Big West All-Freshman Team last season, averaging 8.6 ppg and 3.9 rpg. Sophomore guard Jason Flowers will also be looked on to contribute, having averaged 8.2 ppg a year ago.

Irvine also boasts a strong recruiting class with six new players entering the program. The top two freshmen are 6-foot-3-inch guards Zamiro Bennem and Jerry Green. Bennem was named Orange County Player of the Year by the *Orange County Register* at Magnolia High and Green was an all-state player at Pomona High School where he averaged 31 ppg.

"I'm excited about the new players we brought in," Douglas said. "They have good quickness."

## Cal State Fullerton

BY MARVIN GAPULTOS  
Staff Writer

This season Cal State Fullerton will look to improve on last year's 12-16 record. With eight new players, the Titans will have a young team to contend against other Big West opponents.

"We are going to be a young team coming off a decent finish," Head Coach Bob Hawking said. "We have eight new players, six who are freshmen."

Fullerton has five returners as well, all of whom have been starters at one time or another. Junior Ike Harmon will prove to be a force in the paint, being able to play both the small forward and power forward positions. Harmon led the Titans in rebounds last season with 6.4 rebounds per game. He was second in team scoring at 15.3 points per game. Harmon also earned an All-Big West Conference Honorable Mention a year ago.

Senior center Mark Richardson also returns. Richardson appeared in all 28 games last year and started 24 of them. He shot 50 percent from the floor and averaged 5.4 ppg and 4.8 rpg.

"Richardson has made tremendous strides since the end of last year," Hawking said. "He is the one player that has really emerged for us."

Running the Titans offense will be junior point guard Kenroy Jarrett. He is the only experienced floor general on the Fullerton roster. Jarrett averaged 4.8 ppg and dished out 1.5 assists per game. Jarrett shot .421 from behind the arc. The point guard also led his team at the free-throw line, making 82 percent of his shots.

"[Jarrett is] a great kid and learning to play Division I point guard," the fifth year coach said. "We hope he can give us two solid seasons of being our quarterback."

However, even with Harmon and company, the Titans will be hard pressed to improve on last year's third-place finish.

## Big West Men's Eastern Division Preview

BY STEVE WENDT  
Staff Writer

The Eastern Division of the Big West Conference will be highly competitive in '98-'99. The Idaho Vandals have been tabbed as the favorites and should be the team left standing from the other side of the division when Big West Tournament time rolls around in March. Boise State push the Vandals. Utah State, New Mexico State and Nevada should be spoilers. North Texas will suit up a team, but nobody is quite sure why.

Idaho (15-12 overall in '97-'98) returns four starters including All-Big West guard Avery Curry. Curry averaged 19.7 points per game for Vandal Head Coach Dave Farrar and was twice named Big West Player of the Week. Newcomer Gordon Scott is a 6'5" shooting guard who averaged 22 ppg at Barton Community College and shot 44 percent from behind the arc.

Boise State brings back an All-Conference performer from last season's 17-13 team. 6'6" guard Roberto Bergersen averaged 19.4 ppg. Senior point guard Gerry Washington and Bergersen will shoulder the load for the Broncos, who have 11 players that are either freshman or sophomores.

Utah State lost Marcus Saxon and Head Coach Larry Eustachy from last season's Big West Championship team. Don't expect a repeat, but do expect strong campaigns from seniors Donnie Johnson and Pharoah Davis.

New Mexico State coaching legend Lou Henson returns senior Charles Gosa (12.5 ppg) to a team that has five transfers from the now defunct Northeastern Illinois program.

Nevada lost its top eight scorers and would probably finish in the cellar had it not been for lowly North Texas. The Eagles (5-21 last season) return senior forward Charles Washington (10.5 ppg), and that's it.

# Big West Conference Western Division - Women

## UC Santa Barbara

BY STEVE WENDT  
Staff Writer

The question is, who will come in *second* place in the Big West?

The UCSB women's basketball team comes off a season that saw it tally a 27-6 overall record, advance to the second round of the NCAA tournament, earn a Big West Championship, boast the Big West Player and Freshman of the Year as well as three First-Team All Big West selections, Big West Coach of the Year and two Big West All-Freshman Team members. The bad news for the rest of the country is that the 1998-99 Gauchos look even better.

UCSB, ranked 22nd nationally by the Associated Press, returns all the key components from last year.

Sophomore Erin Buescher is Magic Johnson-esqe on the floor. The defending Big West Player of the Year and member of the U.S. National Team averaged 17.1 points per game, 8.7 rebounds per game, 3.0 assists, 2.6 steals and 1.4 blocks per game. The 6-foot-3-inch guard shot 52 percent from the field.

"It's almost scary to think where she may go and what she may do," UCSB Head Coach Mark French said. "We are certainly glad she'll be doing it for the Gauchos."

A pair of All-Big West selections will also shoulder plenty of the burden for UCSB this season. Junior forward Kristi Rohr (15.7 ppg, 6.7 rpg) and junior point guard Stacy Clinesmith (14.0 ppg, 4.4 apg) will be explosive forces for UCSB. French says that "our program couldn't be in better hands" in reference to Clinesmith and calls Rohr "one of the most dedicated athletes I've ever coached."

Junior Tawnee Cooper (10.8 ppg, 4.6 rpg), sophomore Nicole Greathouse (9.9 ppg, 8.3 rpg), seniors Stephanie Shadwell (4.9 ppg) and Sheila Frial will be major contributors as will newcomers freshman Kayte Christensen and sophomore Rachelle Rogers.

## Cal State Fullerton

BY STEVE WENDT  
Staff Writer

Cal State Fullerton's second-year Head Coach Denise Curry is trying to bring the Titan program to a level she is comfortable with; that level is lofty.

Curry led Fullerton to a 10-17 overall record, but a respectable 7-8 Big West Conference mark. The Titans made the Big West Tournament last March in Reno, but you get the feeling that Curry isn't happy with that record. Curry is UCLA basketball's all-time (male or female) leading scorer and has her number retired at Pauley Pavilion with Alcindor and Walton. She was USA Basketball Player of the Year in 1981.

With such a fantastic career as a player, Curry is now ready to succeed as a head coach.

"I'm looking more forward to this year than last year," Curry said. "I want to get back and compete. The team and I have high expectations."

Leading the Titan attack this season will be a pair of

veterans. Senior point guard Andrea Thieme is Fullerton's top scoring threat. Thieme, an Alameda native, poured in 13.4 points per contest as well as 3.7 assists per game.

Junior Erin Whiteside will anchor the CSUF post. The 6'1" center averaged 11.1 points per game and pulled down 7.8 boards per contest. She also shot 56 percent from the field.

Junior forward Nieshia Cleveland added 6.0 ppg and 3.9 rpg.

Also thrown into the Titan mix will be a crop of newcomers.

"We have five new players, three freshman, one is a 23-year-old from Yugoslavia," Curry said.

The post-teen freshman Curry spoke of is Kristina Naumovic, a member of a Belgrade club team on which she averaged 18.0 ppg.

Another Titan rookie expected to pay dividends on this guard-laden team is 5'6" freshman Missy Bynon. The Villa Park High School star earned Honorable Mention All-American status for her senior year efforts.

## UC Irvine

BY SCOTT HENNESSEE  
Staff Writer

UC Irvine Head Coach Mark Adams says he doesn't have high expectations for his team this year. He just wants the Anteaters to "live game by game and get better every time we play."

It's not that UCI is going to stink up the joint this season, but when you're in the same division as UC Santa Barbara, second place doesn't sound too bad. That's where the Big West's coaches and media have the Anteaters picked to finish, and if Adams was into setting goals, that might not be a bad one to shoot for.

"Santa Barbara is the team to beat," Adams said. "I don't think Coach [Mark] French is taking anybody lightly. This conference has really gotten better over the last couple of years."

Irvine returns 10 players from last year's second-place team, which finished 16-11 overall, 11-4 in the Big West. Leading scorer Laticia Oseguera has graduated, but floor leader Megan Staf-

ford is back for her junior season after averaging 12.2 points and 4.9 assists per game last year.

Adams has implemented a new offense to take advantage of Stafford's court sense as the team's point guard.

"Megan provides great leadership on the court," Adams said. "With our new offense she will really be able to create, and her assists should go up."

With the departure of Oseguera, 6'3" Chelsea Mackey will be looked on to be an even bigger presence inside. The junior from Lakeport, Calif., is UCI's top returning rebounder having averaged 5.1 rpg while also scoring eight points a game.

Junior guard Shannon Anders will provide some outside shooting for the Anteaters. She made 41.9 percent of her three-point attempts last year.

Missy Craine, a 5'11" freshman from Renton, Wash., could make an immediate impact on offense, as she averaged 22.5 ppg as an all-leaguer at Kent-Meridian High School.

## Long Beach State

BY MATT HURST  
Staff Writer

Even though the UCSB women's basketball team has been picked by many to run away with the Big West Conference title, they may face tough opposition in the conference in Long Beach State.

"We have five starters returning for this year," LBSU Head Coach Dallas Boychuk said. "Last year we had only three players returning that had any Division I experience before. So, I'm real excited about having a more experienced team."

Returning from last year's 7-19 squad are two forwards that will prove to be instrumental in Long Beach's success this season. All Big West Honorable Mention senior Tomika Cantley and junior Keshia Wade will look to lead an experienced team to a possible NCAA Tournament berth.

Last year, Cantley averaged 9.9 points per game to go with 9.2 rebounds per game. Wade led the team last year in points per game, averaging 13.0, and she also cleaned the glass with 5.1 boards per contest. Wade is just coming off surgery but she still expects to contribute to the squad.

Leading the 49ers on the floor for the second consecutive year will be sophomore Reta Sula. Last season, Sula averaged 8.7 ppg and dished out 3.3 assists per game. The 5-foot-6-inch guard was named to the All Big West Freshman team last year, setting an LBSU freshman record by hitting 23 three pointers.

With a good core group of returners, Boychuk is pleased to see that the 49ers now have some size to contend with the big guns of the conference. By adding a few tall players to this year's squad, Boychuk and Co. will hope to bring a few more wins to the Pyramid.

"When I first came here as the head coach I was the tallest person in the program," Boychuk said. "Now we've got five players over 6-2, including a 6-8 player."

## Pacific

BY MARVIN GAPULTOS  
Staff Writer

With a brand new head coach in Sherri Murrell, the University of the Pacific Tigers start a new era in the 1998-99 basketball season. Murrell takes the helm at Pacific after serving the last two seasons as an assistant for Portland State University. She has a core of returning players to work with in hopes of improving on last season's 9-18 record.

"I'm very excited to be a part of this group of people," Murrell said. "The coaches all seem to get along, and there's a lot of camaraderie."

As a new coach, however, Murrell still has to get used to her new team and surroundings.

"I'm getting to know our team still," she said. "Sometimes I want to put nametags on our players in practice."

A Tiger that doesn't need a nametag is junior guard Eden Palacio. Palacio led Pacific in scoring and was fifth in the Big West with 15.5 points per game and was a 1998 All-Big West Honorable Mention. Palacio also shot 43 percent from behind the three-point line. She exploded for 43 points, going 9-11 from behind the arc, against Long Beach State in the season finale last year.

"Eden is an explosive and versatile offensive threat on the perimeter," Murrell said of her guard. "She has an excellent three-point shooting range and great quickness."

Another returner to the Tiger roster is senior Sarah Yarbrough. The 6-foot-2-inch forward led her team in rebounds last season with 6.8 boards per game. Yarbrough also averaged 9.8 points and blocked a whopping 22 shots. She begins the 1998-99 season in a tie for fifth place on Pacific's block list at 55. As a senior, Yarbrough will be looked to for leadership, according to Murrell.

"She is a leader on and off the court," Murrell said. "She sets a great example for the younger players to follow."

## Cal Poly SLO

BY SCOTT HENNESSEE  
Staff Writer

While the men's basketball team at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo has risen from nowhere to become the most feared team in the Big West, the Mustang women should be fearful of not winning a game.

Cal Poly's top returning scorer from last year's 6-20 team, Stephanie Osorio, will redshirt this year to heal an injured foot. Maybe second-year Head Coach Faith Mimnaugh wishes the entire team could take a year off to practice, because this year's squad doesn't look to be much better than last's. The Mustangs should be accustomed to losing by now; they have won a combined 21 games in the last four years. That's six less wins than UCSB piled up last season alone.

If Cal Poly is to get things turned around, 5-foot-8-inch guard Kristie Griffin, the team's only senior, will be the one to do it. Griffin redshirted last year due to injury, but she averaged se-

ven points per game and led the team with 47 steals in 1996-1997.

"Kristie is a scorer through and through," Mimnaugh said. "She has an eye for the bucket and a competitive spirit that will engulf many opponents."

Cal Poly's only returning starter, 5-foot-7-inch guard Sherilyn Frazier, will also be counted on to produce for the Mustangs. The junior played in all 26 games last season, averaging 7.6 ppg in conference games.

"Sherilyn is a gamer," Mimnaugh said. "She is an explosive guard with the physical strength of a post player and poses a serious threat from any position on the floor."

Of the nine new faces on the roster, the Mustang's hope to get some production out of frosh center's Stephanie Brown and Alexis Hill. Brown is a local product out of Arroyo Grande High School who stands 6 foot 5 inches and was named San Luis Obispo County Player of the Year in 1998. Hill was a four-year starter at Pomona High School.

# Big West Women's Eastern Division Preview

BY STEVE WENDT  
Staff Writer

The question in the Big West Conference's Eastern Division appears to be what team will get to stay the extra night in Reno and lose to UC Santa Barbara in the conference tournament finals.

The favorite appears to be Boise State with Idaho nipping at the Broncos' heels. Nevada will be competitive but not nearly as strong as in 1997-98. New Mexico State and North Texas will round out the five-team eastern half of the conference.

Trisha Stevens' Boise State ball club lost its two leading scorers from a year ago, but it brings back eight letterwinners. The Broncos are led by sophomore center Stephanie Block (no kidding, a center named Block). The 6'4" Block averaged 10.9 points per game, pulled down 4.8 rebounds and swatted 2.0 shots per game. The Broncos finished 19-11 overall, 11-3 in the Big West last season and appeared in the NIT.

First year Head Coach Hilary Recknor inherits a strong Idaho program that was 15-15 a year ago. The first-year coach returns one of the conference's top players, junior forward Alli Nieman. The 6'1" Nieman (16.6 ppg, 7.2 rpg in

'97-'98) is a two-time All-Big West selection and an All-American Candidate this year. Junior point guard Susan Woolf averaged 12.8 ppg last season.

Nevada will compete with a good core of returners, but lost last season's (19-9 overall, 10-4 in Big West) top two scorers and rebounders. Nevada will struggle without Jelena Zrnic (14.7 ppg, 7.7 rpg) and Iesha Donadelle (15.8 ppg, 7.1 rpg).

North Texas finished 10-17 overall in '97-'98 and is expected to do the about the same this season, while New Mexico State will field nine new players and will struggle to improve upon its 7-19 record from a year ago.

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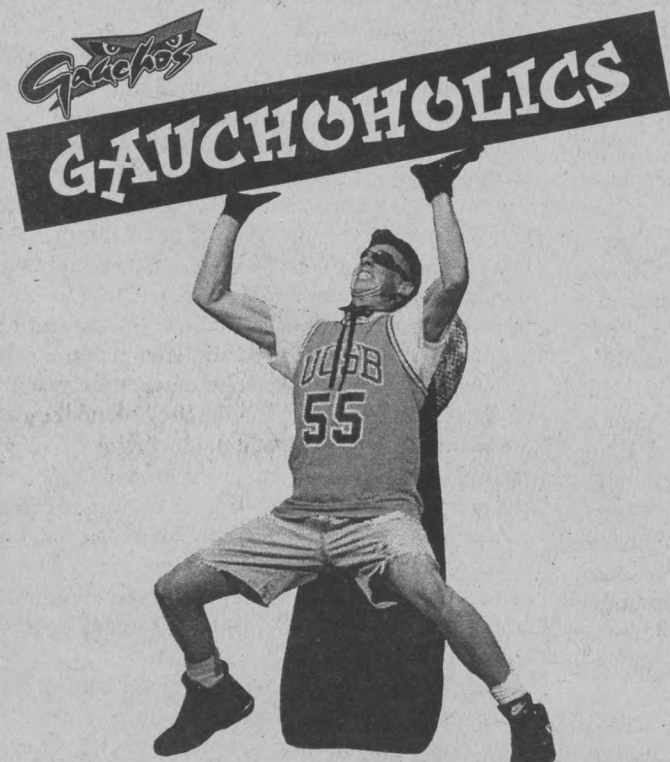
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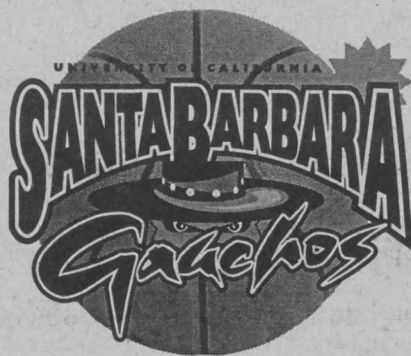
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It's time for you to join the **Gauchoholics**- UCSB's new student fan club. **Gauchoholics** are addicted to Gaucho sports and are part of the 12 step program. Each Gauchoholic event is another step towards Gauchoholism. And the more events you go to, the more prizes you win. The \$5 membership gets you a World Famous Gauchoholic T-shirt and counts as step 1 of the program. Then just bring your membership card to all Gauchoholic events, get stamped, and get your prize. Some of the free stuff you will get for attending Gaucho events: Free load of laundry from Bubbles N Beans, extra value meal from McDonalds, UCSB window decal, slice of pizza from Giovanni's, and much more. And if you complete the 12 step program, you are invited to the Gauchoholic bash at the end of the year. Hey- get addicted.



**November 21st is G-Day.** Sign up at the Men's Basketball game versus Westmont. Bring your \$5, get your World Famous Shirt, and begin your journey towards Gauchoholism.

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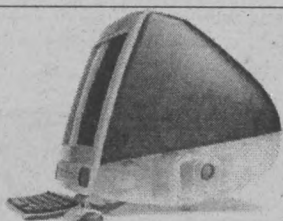
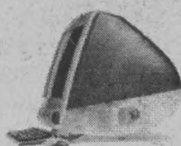
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## UCSB Athletes



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