

SPORTS MONDAY

Daily Nexus

May 20, 1996

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Gaucha Future To Be Told Today As NCAA Unveils Tourney Teams

■ Five Santa Barbara Players Honored With All-Big West Awards

By Curtis Kaiser
Staff Writer

As the UCSB baseball team prepares to find out today at noon whether it will be spending Memorial Day in Santa Barbara or at an NCAA Regional site, the squad has reason to be proud even if it does not earn a postseason berth.

Five Gauchos — David Willis, Brett Hardy, Wynter Phoenix, Ryan Kritscher and Lou Tapia — have been named to the Big West All-Conference teams, while Head Coach Bob Brontsema earned Co-Coach of the Year honors.

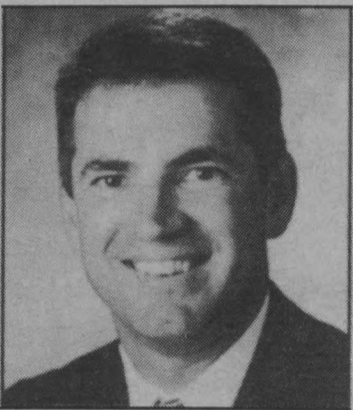
The five UCSB players were the most recognized by the Big West since the conference awarded postseason honors to six Gauchos in 1992. Santa Barbara last had a coach of the year in 1986.

Brontsema most likely received the award because of his squad's tremendous improvement from the previous season. In 1995, the Gauchos went 24-26 overall and 8-13 in the Big West. This year, Santa Barbara jumped to 32-18 overall with a 14-7 conference mark. UCSB was ranked for much of the season and finished in a tie for second place in the conference.

Brontsema was grateful for the accolades given him by his

fellow coaches, but the third-year head coach would rather receive something else today — a bid to the NCAA Tournament.

"It's very meaningful, but I would trade it in for a regional berth," he said. "It's a great honor and I'm very appreciative, but it's not about individual things, it's about team things."



Bob Brontsema

Willis, a junior catcher/first baseman/designated hitter, was named to the conference's first team as a first baseman. With 16 home runs on the season, Willis was just one behind conference leader Mark Kotsay (who was chosen the conference's top player for the second consecutive year) and one behind UCSB's all-time record. He led the Gauchos and ranked fourth in the conference with 66 RBI, and was second at UCSB with a

.362 batting average.

Willis was happy that the conference recognized his performance.

"I didn't get anything last year, so I was really excited to get it this year," he said. "I worked hard — I'm glad I got it."

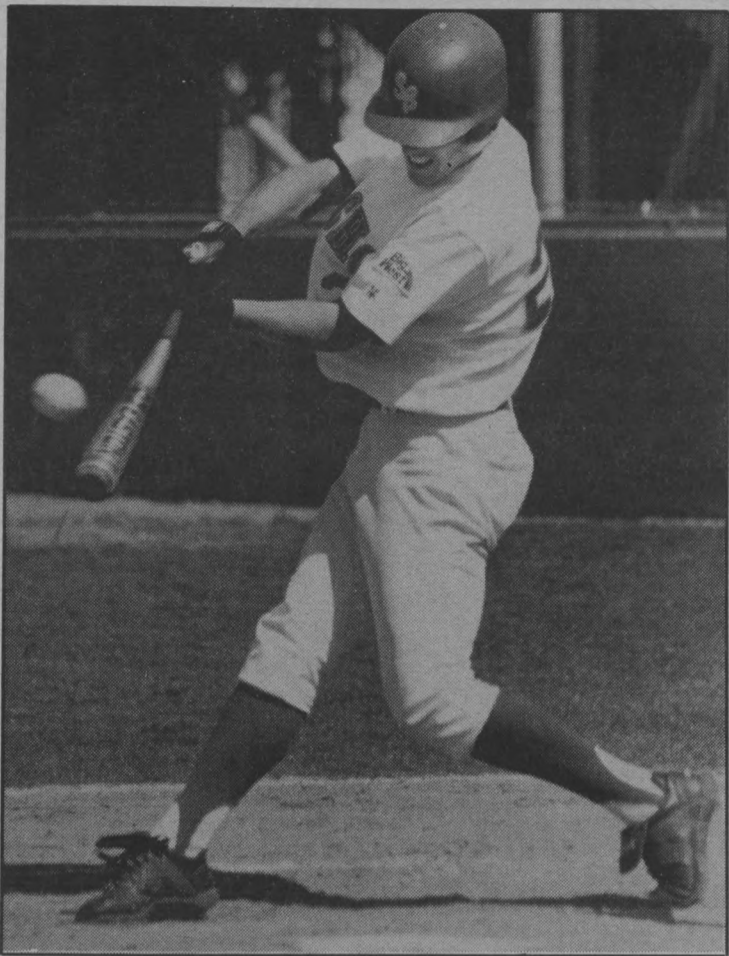
Hardy was the Gauchos' other first-team selection, earning a spot as an outfielder. The junior left-hander batted .349 on the season and tied for the team and conference lead with five triples. He also added eight home runs and 43 RBI on the season.

"It's always nice to get rewarded," Hardy said. "This conference has a lot of good players."

UCSB's second-team selections were seniors Phoenix and Kritscher. Phoenix, the team's center fielder, put together a strong second half in addition to breaking the Big West career triples record en route to a .325, eight HR, 52 RBI year.

Kritscher, who had transferred to UCSB from Southern Mississippi this season, battled injuries early in the year and was forced to alternate between the outfield and the designated hitter spot. He led the team with a .399 batting average and was inching toward .400 when he fractured a bone in his hand in the team's final regular-season se-

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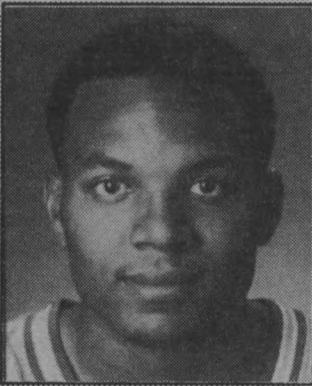
NEXUS FILE PHOTO

HARDY EFFORT: Junior Brett Hardy enjoyed a great season as he was named to the Big West Conference first team.

The waiting game ends today at noon for the UCSB baseball team. Find out who is in and who is out of the NCAA baseball regionals when ESPN announces the tournament field live.

Daily Nexus Athlete of the Year Honorable Mention

Lelan McDougal



SPORT: Basketball

POSITION: Guard

YEAR: Senior

STATS:

Poured in 18.7 points per game for the Gauchos - tops on the team and second best in the Big West Conference.

Led the conference and the team with a .441 three-point field goal percentage on 49-111 shooting.

ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Nearly led an overachieving UCSB team to the postseason.

Sunk a desperation three-pointer in the squad's final game of the season against Long Beach State to send the game into double overtime.

QUOTABLE: "It took some time to make some adjustments, but once I made those, everything kind of flowed from there."

IN THE NEXUS' REMAINING NINE ISSUES THIS QUARTER, WE WILL RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING UCSB ATHLETES FOR THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE 1995-96 SCHOOL YEAR. THE FIRST EIGHT ATHLETES (FOUR MEN, FOUR WOMEN) PROFILED WILL BE THE NEXUS' HONORABLE MENTION SELECTIONS FOR ATHLETE OF THE YEAR. ON THE FINAL DAY OF THE QUARTER, WE WILL PROFILE BOTH THE MALE AND FEMALE ATHLETES OF THE YEAR, IN ADDITION TO RECOGNIZING AN OUTSTANDING ATHLETE FROM EACH OF UCSB'S INTERCOLLEGIATE AND CLUB SPORTS.

Women's Polo Proves Point Throughout Premier Season

Women's Water Polo Season in Review

By Tiana Cassity
Staff Writer

With its long climb to success and an occasional steep drop into disappointment, the UCSB women's water polo team has just finished one roller coaster of a season.

The season started explosively for the Gauchos (11-25 overall, 2-4 in the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation). After a long awaited promotion from club sport status to the NCAA level, Santa Barbara blew away the USC Trojans in its first ever intercollegiate game.

Ranked 11th nationally at the start of the season, not much more than mediocrity was expected from UCSB. However, the Gauchos proved they were a team to be taken seriously — most recently last weekend, when they reached national competition at UC Davis for the first time in three years. After a celebrated 10-9 victory over the University of Maryland, UCSB closed out the season ranked eighth.

With the amount of talent on the squad, it is not difficult to understand why it has done so well in its first NCAA season. The strong play of team members such as junior two-meter utility player Keri Santos and senior driver Calla Allison kept the Gauchos afloat.

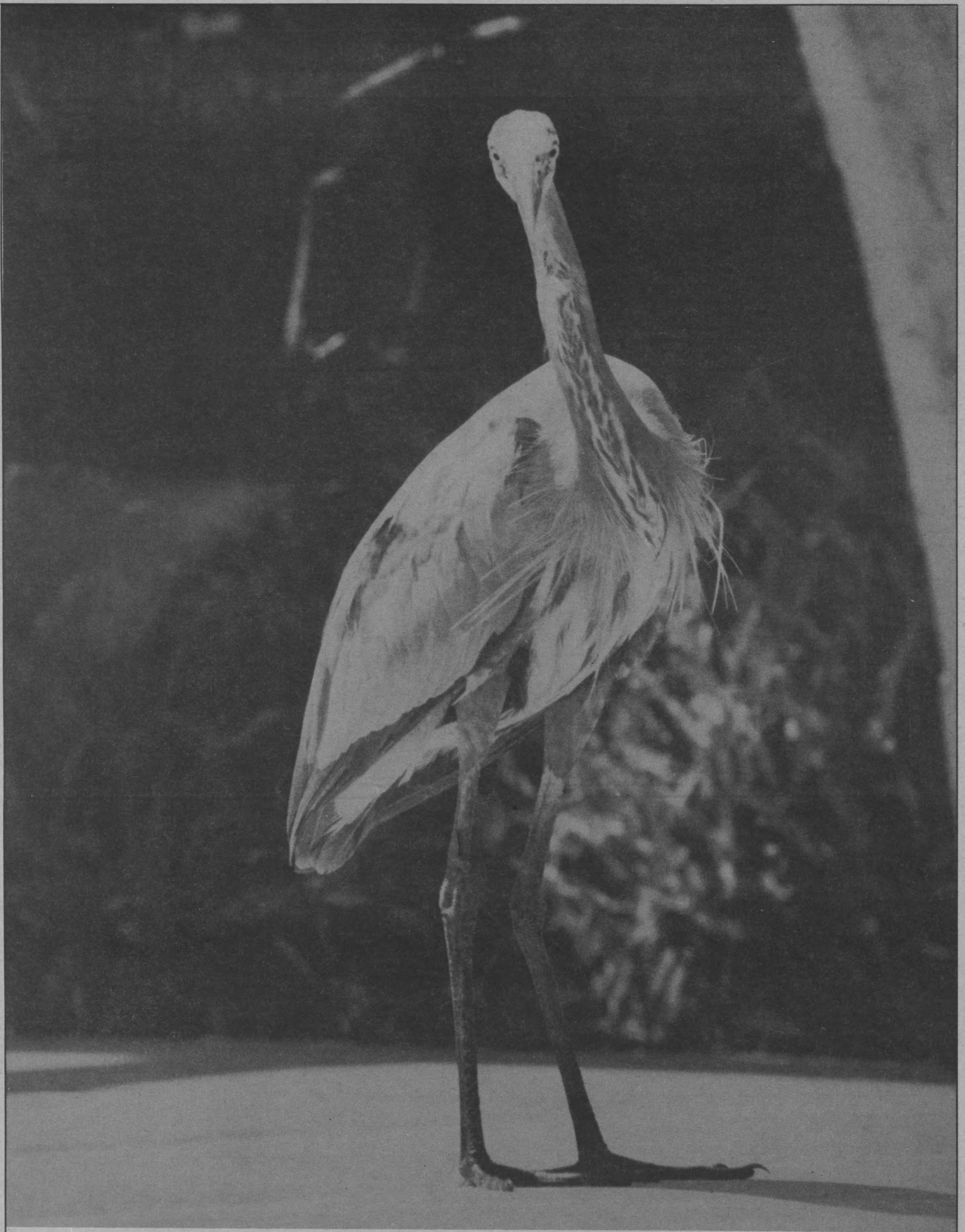
For Santos, who scored 54 goals during the year, and Allison, who put 41 points on the books, this season is not quite over yet. Both players will travel to Montreal this June to showcase their talent on the U.S. national team.

Other players as well have proven their worth to the squad. Along with Santos and Allison, junior two-meter player Suzanne Eskilson and freshman driver Wendy Jensen were named to the Southern Division second team at the MPSF Tournament.

Goaltenders Angie Seto and Lisa Janz both were stellar in the net this season for the Gauchos. Janz, a junior, made some impressive saves, including a four-meter shot fired from the number one team in the country, UCLA. However, Seto, a freshman, was the backbone of UCSB's defense, finishing the season with 80 saves to her credit.

UCSB finished the season ranked eighth despite its 11-25 record for two main reasons: Women's water polo is a fairly new sport in the NCAA and there are not very many schools competing on an intercollegiate level, and the Gauchos suffered most of their losses from just a few top teams — #1 UCLA defeated UCSB each time the schools met — 8-4, 12-2, 10-5, 11-3 and 9-1, while San Diego State also had its way with the Gauchos five times, winning 14-6, 15-3, 11-6, 19-7 and 15-7.

After all of the ups and downs this season have held for Santa Barbara, the team's appearance at nationals and its #8 ranking are two accomplishments which are certain to mark UCSB women's water polo's first intercollegiate season as a successful one.



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Daily Nexus

Softball Season Filled With Upbeats, Downbeats

Softball Year in Review

By Michael Cadilli
Staff Writer

The Beatles may have unknowingly captured the true spirit of the UCSB softball team's 1996 season when they sang about "the long and winding road."

The UCSB softball squad did make big strides this season in its effort to build a winning program, but it seemed that just as the Gauchos were ready to take two steps forward, they took two steps back.

At one point, Santa Barbara was looking good and riding an eight-game winning streak that pushed its record to 13-9, but it followed that up with another streak — a six-game skid.

Most people would chalk the streaks up to luck and say, "That's just the nature of the sport." But it definitely goes beyond that in this case.

The team in the past five years has seen its share of problems and instability, ranging from what some have perceived to be an absence

of competent coaching to a lack of support from the athletics department and student body that nearly resulted in the cancellation of the program entirely.

But with the hiring of Head Coach Liz Kelly two years ago and the addition this year of a highly experienced assistant coach, Tony Foti, the department finally brought in some leadership to complement third-year Assistant Coach Melissa Plaster, hoping that this would turn into some Gaucho wins.

Although UCSB had some early success, the squad actually posted a worse record (20-30 overall, 9-21 in the Big West) this year compared to last (24-35, 10-22). On a brighter side, UCSB was more competitive in 1996 — Santa Barbara played 12 one-run games and 15 two-run contests in just 50 matches, proof that the squad was in almost every game.

Several players, many of them juniors, stepped up their games this season to help UCSB out to its good start. Junior pitcher Megan O'Brien, junior left fielder Danelle Lovetro and junior right fielder Jennifer Merlo rebounded from rocky seasons in 1995 to supply some lifeblood to the squad.

O'Brien posted a team-best 2.18 ERA and

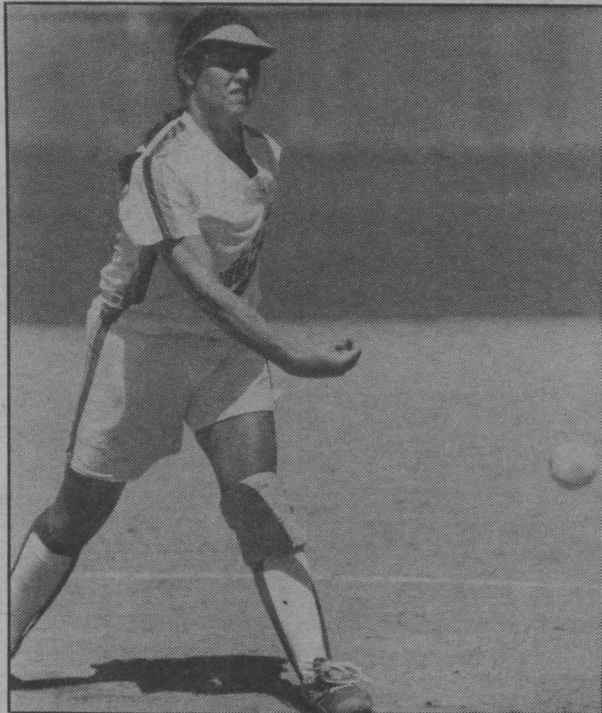
96 strikeouts in 106 innings (although she had only a 5-10 record) this year, which was a great improvement from her 3.31 ERA, 60-strikeout performance of 1995 in 167 innings.

In 1995 Lovetro saw limited action, hitting just .133 with one RBI in 75 plate appearances, but broke out to hit .234 with 11 RBI in the '96 campaign. Similarly, Merlo had a team-worst .124 average with only one extra-base hit in '95, but found her swing this year to post a .286 average, including a home run.

Juniors Kacie Ontiveros and Alysia Hendricks were also two key pieces added to the puzzle. Ontiveros added depth to the pitching staff, going 6-10 with a 2.42 ERA, while Hendricks bolstered the infield, making only nine errors at shortstop.

But the stars of the team were definitely seniors Michelle Ray and Stacy Atwood. Ray broke the single-season Gaucho record by hitting .370, adding a homer and 16 RBI.

Atwood led the squad with 17 RBI, two home runs and 14 doubles (also a single-season record). She ended her career in the top 10 of every offense category, while finishing in the top 10 in five of six pitching categories as well.



NEXUS FILE PHOTO

FINAL PITCH: Senior Stacy Atwood ended her career, but left her mark in UCSB's record book.

BIGWEST

games to lift his average over the .300 mark.



David Willis

Continued from p.1A
ries at Cal State Fullerton. Kritscher missed the Big West Conference Tournament but could be back in action if the Gauchos make the NCAA tourney. Tapia, a senior third baseman, also overcame a sluggish start to become one of the team's hottest hitter down the stretch, batting .429 in the season's final 10 regular-season

Do you think that you can write about sports? Then join the Daily Nexus sports staff. We are currently recruiting new writers for next year. If interested call Curtis, Alex, Brian or Mike at 893-2694 or come by the office located under Storke Tower.

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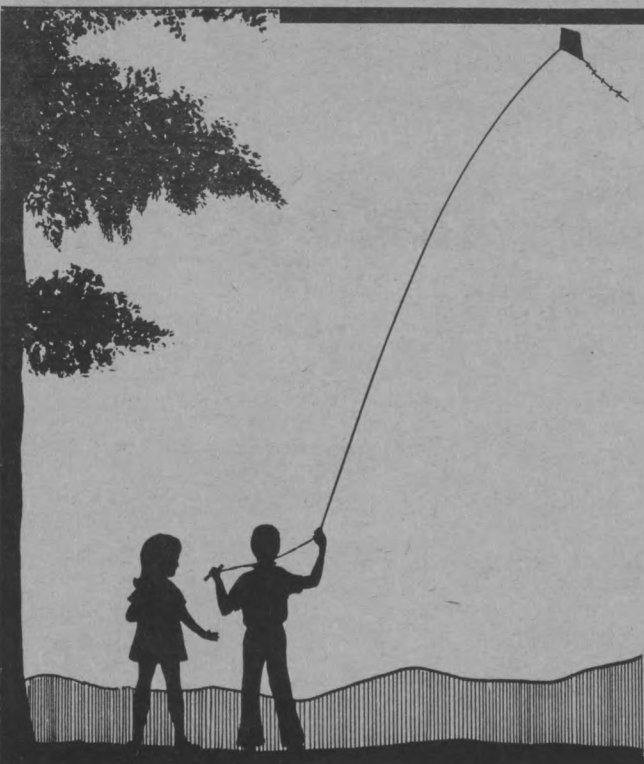
Due to the Memorial Day Holiday on Monday, May 27, the following deadlines for Nexus advertising are in effect:

3 pm Thursday

for the issue of Tuesday, may 28

Noon Friday

for the issue of Wednesday, May 24



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