

# SPORTS MONDAY

Daily Nexus

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## Softball Bats Hibernating; Team Falters

By Scott Hennessee  
Staff Writer

When a team is playing at its best, it takes advantage of every opportunity afforded it during a game. Every hit seems to find a hole, and every big out is recorded.

Lately the UCSB softball team (20-19 overall, 4-10 in the Big West) has not been able to get that key hit or crucial out. Consequently, it has lost five of its last six games.

Sunday the Gauchos were shut out twice in a doubleheader sweep at the hands of Cal State Fullerton. Santa Barbara had eight singles in the first game, but left 10 runners stranded in a 4-0 loss.

In the second game, Titan pitchers Danielle Ferreira and Dana Coombes combined to shut out the Gauchos 1-0 in a pitcher's duel.

UCSB freshman pitcher Jennifer Tolton threw seven strong innings in a losing effort. Tolton gave up only two hits, and the one run was unearned. Fullerton center fielder Rachel Olivera dropped down a bunt and managed to make it all the way home

See SOFT p.2A

## Women's Hoops Drops NCAA Tourney Opener

■ Alexander Scores 26 Second-Half Points

By Brian Berger  
Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — When down by 17 points, the only thing left to do is attempt to charge back. The UCSB women's basketball team nearly did just that March 15, when the squad's season came to a close in a controversial 72-69 loss to Tulane University in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

The Gauchos (24-7) reached the NCAA Tournament after defeating UC Irvine 81-66 March 8, earning the Big West Conference's automatic bid. Santa Barbara was then shocked and dismayed as the NCAA selection committee gave the team a #13 seed and placed it in the East Regional.

The early pace of the game vs. Tulane favored UCSB, as both teams raced up and down the court in the opening minutes. The Gauchos struck first as senior forward Amy Smith, who was named Big West Tournament MVP, knocked down a jumper 21 seconds into the game. Freshman Kristi Rohr made one free throw and Smith buried another jumper before the Green Wave posted its first points with 16:45 left in the first half.

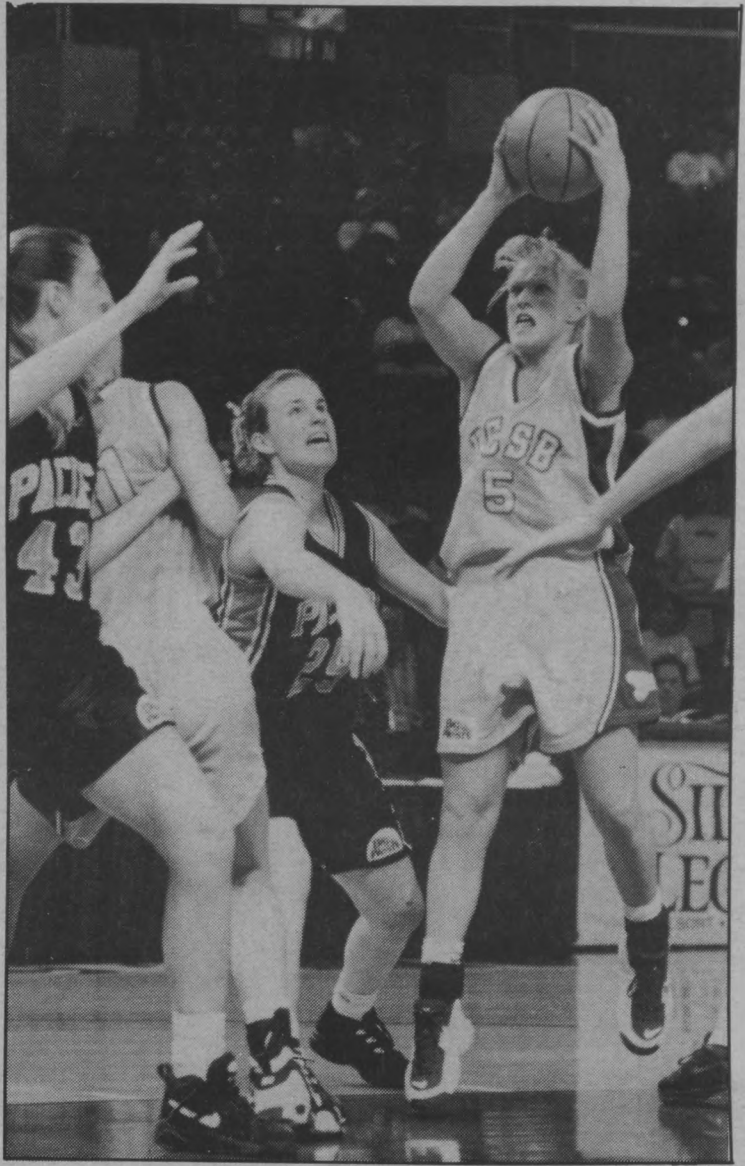
Tulane (27-4) struggled to find a rhythm in its half-court offense but eventually began pounding the ball inside to its post players. Senior center Barbara Farris scored Tulane's first five points of the game, using her size to dominate the paint. Once secure in its offense, the Green Wave went on a 10-0 run to build a 13-7 lead midway through the first half.

Although Tulane owned a size advantage in the middle, Head Coach Lisa Stockton was surprised by UCSB's defense.

"They are a lot more physical than we expected," Stockton said. "We are used to playing more traditional post players, so Smith caused us some problems."

Freshman point guard Stacy Clinesmith responded to Tulane's inside game by scoring seven of UCSB's next nine points to put Santa Barbara back on top, 16-13. The Green Wave then went on another run in the last five minutes of the first half to go up 29-21 at the break.

See WOMEN p.2A



LAST SHOT: Senior guard Erin Alexander scored 26 second-half points to lead the Gauchos in the final game of her career.

## Men's Basketball Loses First Game in Big West Tournament to Aggies

By Yier Shi  
Staff Writer

The UCSB men's basketball season ended similar to the way it was for most of the year — without fanfare.

The Gauchos (12-15) bowed out to Utah State 81-66 in the opening round of the Big West Tournament on March 7 in Reno, Nev.

Led by First Team Big West selection Marcus Saxon, the Aggies attacked Santa Barbara on offense and played ferocious defense.

"They broke us down with the dribble and then beat us on the backboards," said UCSB Head Coach Jerry Pimm. "I thought we did a good job of getting it back to where we had a chance. It took a lot out of us. It's just too bad that we couldn't sustain it."

Utah State took a commanding edge inside with its post players, out-rebounding the Gauchos 40-31, including a 22-3 edge in the starting-forward positions.

"Inside, we had a size advantage, but they had a quickness advantage," said junior guard Raymond Tutt, who scored 22 points to lead UCSB. "We really couldn't cover down off of their guards because they're great shooters. We had to just go one-on-one with their post players, and they just got us."

Tutt, whose 22 points made him the all-time single-season scoring leader with 649 points, was held in check for most of the night.

"It seemed like they knew our plays," Tutt said. "They were ready to play."

Saxon had 25 points and four assists in his 32 minutes. Senior Maurice Spillers contributed 21 points and 11 rebounds while junior Antwan Smith added 14 points and 11 boards for the Aggies.

"These are tough guys right now," said Utah Head Coach Larry Eustachy. "When we can spread the floor late, have a nice little lead and go to the foul line, we're looking good."

See HOOP p.2A

## Gaucha Baseball Remains Confident After Slow Start, Ready to Turn Things Around

By Yier Shi  
Staff Writer

Last year's UCSB baseball squad started Big West Conference play slowly, losing its first three games. That squad, however, stormed back in the middle of the season to earn a berth in the NCAA West Regionals at the end of the year.

The 1997 team is hoping to have the same kind of turnaround. After starting the conference season 4-8, the Gauchos now own a sub-par 14-17 overall record — far below the 20-11 mark they had at this point last year.

But the team is confident about its chances after taking two of three games from #25 University of Nevada this weekend. In conference play before the Wolf Pack matchup, the Gauchos had been swept in a three-game series by Long Beach State and taken one game of three from both Cal State Fullerton and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

"We're moving in the right direction this weekend," said Santa Barbara Head Coach Bob Brontsema. "We're looking to turn it around. We believe in ourselves [to] make the Big West Tournament and do some damage in it."

Like most college baseball teams, the fate of the Gauchos will rest on their pitching. With only seven regular pitchers on the team, the staff is eager to live up to its task.

"Our pitchers will need quality starts," said junior starter Seth Bean. "When you have good starts, you keep your confidence and you build confidence for the rest of the team. I see the same thing happening this year as last year. I think we'll rebound well."

The starting pitchers showed signs of brilliance this weekend. With Brontsema juggling his rotation, senior Bryan Noyes (2-2), freshman Barry Zito (1-5) and Bean (2-5) all turned in solid performances against Nevada.

Noyes, who struggled earlier in the year, has displayed signs of dominance as of late. He picked up a victory in a solid effort against the Wolf Pack after a stellar complete game shutout against #23 Cal State Fullerton on March 21.

"He's got better control," Brontsema said of Noyes' recent resurgence. "He's throwing the slider over for strikes. We're moving in the right direction because we've got some quality pitching."

With the pitching holding up, the Gaucha offense has not

led by senior David Willis, Santa Barbara is batting at a .310 clip and averaging 7.9 runs per game.

Willis, an All-American candidate, leads the squad with a .393 average, nine home runs and 31 RBIs. He is also the team leader in doubles (12), total bases (87), slugging percentage (.744) and on-base percentage (.493).

Five other Gauchos in the lineup are batting above .300: sophomore second baseman Bryan LaCour (.327), sophomore left fielder Brad Wright (.315), senior designated hitter Justin Balsler (.309), junior shortstop Michael Young (.307) and freshman third baseman Justin Gemoll (.305).

"We're scoring runs," Brontsema said. "It's just sometimes we're not scoring as many as the opponents."

The team will now look to continue its progress with an upcoming three-game series at New Mexico State. The next home game will be April 8 against Cal State Northridge.

### Sporting Events Calendar

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Men's Gymnastics @ UC Irvine	No Events Scheduled	No Events Scheduled	No Events Scheduled	Men's tennis @ Idaho Women's tennis at Irvine Baseball @ New Mexico State 2 p.m. Men's Volleyball vs. BYU 7:05 p.m.	Men's tennis @ Washington Women's tennis vs. LMU 11 a.m. Softball vs. Cal Poly SLO 1 p.m. Baseball @ New Mexico State 1 p.m. Men's Gymnastics @ NCAA Regionals	Men's tennis vs. St Mary's @ Seattle, WA TBA Baseball @ New Mexico State 1 p.m.



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## SOFT

**Continued from p.1A**  
 via a three-base error by Santa Barbara. "We hit the ball well and had rallies going with two outs," UCSB Head Coach Liz Kelly said. "We just couldn't get the hits when we needed them."  
 On Saturday, UCSB split a pair of games with Utah State. It fell behind early in the first game and could not come back, losing by a score of 5-2. Freshman center fielder Tonya Dias went 2-4 and drove in both runs for the Gauchos.  
 In game two, Santa Barbara's bats came alive, exploding for eight runs. Dias went long for her eighth home run of the year, and senior first baseman Jessica Montgomery belted the first round-tripper of her career. Senior pitcher Megan O'Brien allowed four hits and walked

none in her fourth shutout of the season, allowing the Gauchos to cruise to a 8-0 win.  
 "That's how we are capable of hitting," Kelly said.  
 Several players have already broken school records in various offensive categories, with 20 games left to play. Freshman catcher Kendra Wood's seven home runs and Dias' eight eclipse the previous record of five. Wood also broke the record for RBIs in a season with 31, three better than the previous mark. Freshman infielder Mandy Edwards broke the school record of 27 runs scored. The second baseman has touched home 28 times to date.  
 "We are in pretty good shape," Kelly said. "We need to take every opportunity we get. We've got to do a little more to get the wins."

## WOMEN

**Continued from p.1A**  
 One glaring note at half-time was the performance of senior guard Erin Alexander. The Big West Player of the Year was held scoreless at intermission for the second time this season, going 0-8 from the floor.  
 Things began to unravel after UCSB called a 20-second timeout, as the team was called for a technical foul for having six players on the court. Tulane made both free throws and converted on the following possession to build a 42-27 lead.  
 With their backs against the wall the Gauchos turned to Alexander, who made a three-pointer for her first bucket of the evening. However, for every basket Santa Barbara made Tulane was able to answer, keeping the lead above 15 points until the 13:11 mark, when Alexander knocked down her

second three of the game. As its lead dwindled, the Green Wave went back to the middle, where Williams scored another easy layup with 11:57 left on the clock. Rohr and Clinesmith scored the game's next six points, but a three-point play by Mary Lowry spoiled UCSB's run. Rohr finished off a fast break to make the score 54-45, but Tulane again pulled away with baskets by Farris and Lowry.  
 Alexander, however, was able to answer once again. The senior, whose shooting touch appeared to have deserted her in the first half, buried four more three-pointers in the next four minutes to pull the Gauchos within three, 64-61.  
 Jump shots by Alexander and Rohr pulled Santa Barbara within two before Hadley made a tough shot from the corner to extend the lead. Tulane stayed ahead by four until Alexander hit a pair of free

throws to make the score 71-69 with 44.8 seconds left in the game.  
 After the foul shots UCSB put pressure on the ball in the backcourt. The gamble paid off: Clinesmith stole the ball and started a three-on-one fast break. The freshman dished off to Rohr, who converted the layup only to have the basket annulled because Clinesmith was called for a charge against Rodnelle Hadley after she passed the ball.  
 The Gauchos fouled Hadley on the inbound pass and she made one of two free throws to make the score 72-69. Alexander's final attempt rimmed out, ending her streak of six consecutive three-pointers and sending Tulane into the second round.  
 Alexander led all scorers with 26 points, all of which came during a 15-minute span.

## HOOP

**Continued from p.1A**  
 The Aggies made 22 of 25 free throws. The only other Gauchos scoring in double digits were sophomore Josh Merrill, with 12 points, and junior Les Bean, with 11. Merrill also pulled down three

boards.  
 Utah State, however, lost in the second round to eventual tournament champion University of the Pacific. UOP, which earned an automatic berth in the NCAA tournament, went on to lose in the first round to fourth-seeded St. Joseph's University.

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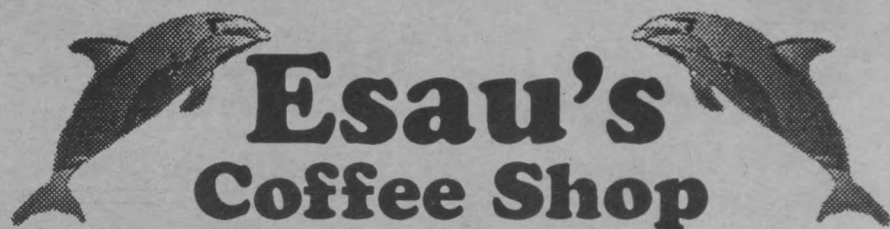


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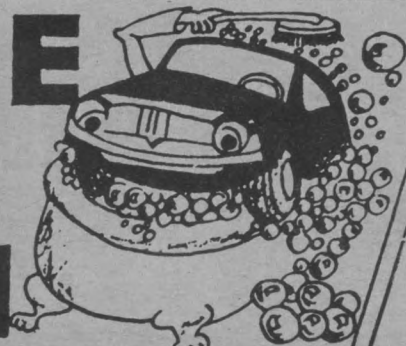
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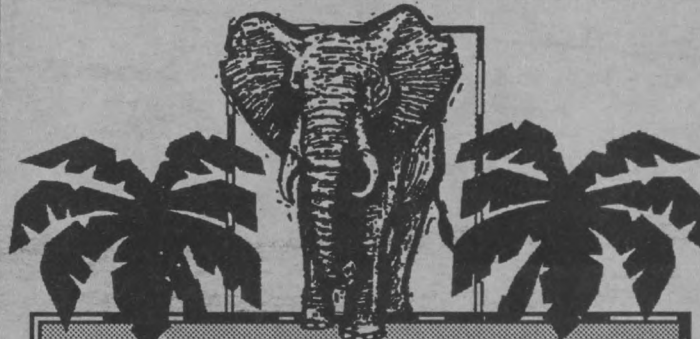


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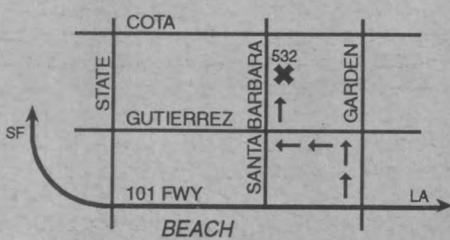
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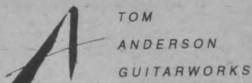
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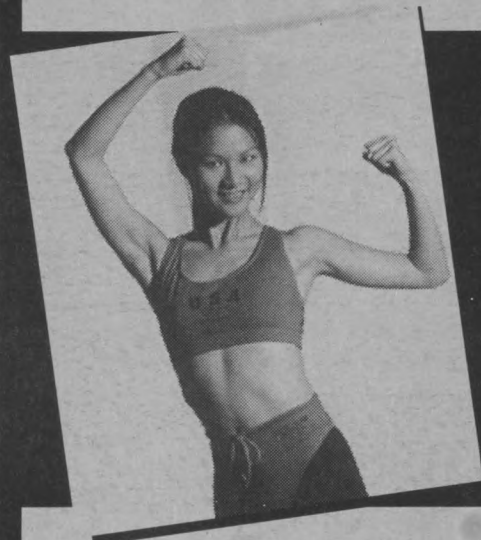
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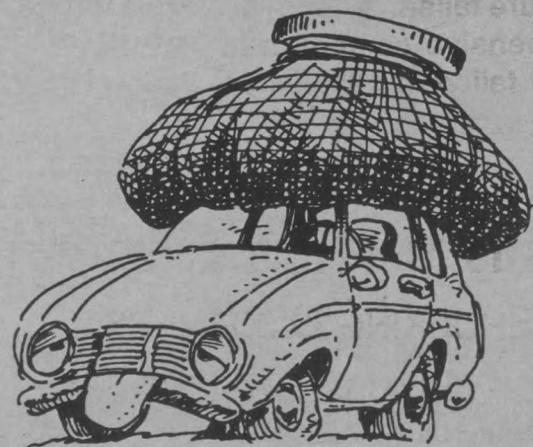
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