



# 2008 BIG WEST MEN'S SOCCER

Big West Conference - 2 Corporate Park, Suite 206, Irvine, CA 92606

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## Preseason Poll Release - Monday, August 18, 2008

### UC Santa Barbara Favored By Coaches for Record Sixth Big West Title

IRVINE, CA – Two-time defending Big West men's soccer champion UC Santa Barbara was tabbed as the favorite among the league's coaches for the 2008 crown, a title which would give the Gauchos a league-record six championships. UCSB claimed six first place votes on the way to 47 points for the top position.

The Gauchos, who are ranked as high as #9 in the first national preseason polls, lost significant firepower in four-time All-America Andy Iro as well as Eric Avila and Ciaran O'Brien, but return a wealth of talent to the pitch in 2008. Leading the returnees is senior **Chris Pontius** (11 g, 2 a), the 2007 Big West Offensive Player of the Year, a first team All-Big West selection and third team All-West Region choice, as well as fellow first team All-Conference choice senior **Alfonso Motagalvan** (5g, 4 a) and 2006 College Cup Most Outstanding Offensive Player senior **Nick Perera** (3 g, 1 a). UCSB is also extremely talented on the backline, with returning stalwarts **Jon Curry**, **David Walker**, **Kyle Kaveny**, **Michael Boxall** and **Jonathan Zerah**. Add in a recruiting class ranked #6 in the country by *College Soccer News*, and the Gauchos have an excellent mix of talent ready to step in for the departed stars as they look to make another splash on the national scene.

Second year Division I program UC Davis finished second in the poll with 39 points and the remaining first place vote. The Aggies enter 2008 on the heels of a highly successful inaugural DI campaign, going 12-5-3 overall and finishing second in the conference at 7-3-2. For their efforts, UCD was extended an at-large invitation to the NCAA Tournament where it fell in a tightly contested double-overtime match to Pac-10 champion California. The Aggies return the bulk of that record-setting bunch in the form of seven starters and 17 letterwinners. Head coach **Dwyane Shaffer** has five of the six players who tallied double-digit points returning from a year ago, led by leading scorer and second team All-Big West selection **Sule Anibaba** (8 g, 1 a). The Aggies, who ranked ninth in the NCAA in scoring in 2007 (2.2 goals per game), also bring back **Paul Marcoux** (5 g, 3a), **Quincy Amarikwa** (5 g, 2 a), **Chris Leer** (5 g, 2 a) and **Ian Conklin** (4 g, 4 a) to the fold. Combine their explosive offense and a much improved defense and UC Davis easily has the ability to claim its first league title in program history.

Cal Poly, coming off a breakout 11-win season, finished third in the preseason poll with 38 points. A year ago, the young Mustangs won the most overall and conference matches (6) the program has ever recorded as a member of the Big West. The 11 victories also tied the program-single season record, while the six conference wins marked the first time Cal Poly won more than three conference matches in its Division I tenure. Year three under the Paul Holocher reign promises to be even better as the Mustangs return nine starters and 19 letterwinners from a club that narrowly missed an invitation to the NCAA Tournament. Leading the Cal Poly charge is a pair of sophomores in first team All-Conference selection and 2007 Big West Freshman of the Year **David Zamora** (6 g, 5 a) and second team All-Big West selection **Kyle Montgomery** (6 g, 3 a). In goal is an experienced keeper in senior **Eric Branagan-Franco** who posted a 0.90 goals against average and shut out nine opponents a year ago. With the Mustangs gaining valuable experience in 2007, this seasoned group seems primed for bigger goals in 2008.

Cal State Northridge was fourth in the poll with 26 points. The Matadors return a wealth of veterans in the form of nine starters and 16 letterwinners, making them one of the most experienced clubs in the Big West. Leading the returnees is junior **Sunghyun Kim** (4 g, 3 a), sophomore **Camilo Rojas** (4 g, 1 a) and second team All-Big West selection sophomore **Rafael Garcia** (2 g, 2 a). CSUN is also buoyed by the return of senior goalkeeper **Kevin Guppy**, a fixture in who has played in 60 of the Matadors' 61 matches in his career. He ranks fifth all-time in league history in shutouts (19), seventh in goals against average (0.96) and fourth in wins (30) and matches in goal. With a bevy of returnees and some exceptional young talent, Cal State Northridge has the tools necessary to get back to the top of the Big West.

Rounding out the rest of the 2008 preseason poll was UC Irvine in fifth place with 20 tallies, followed by UC Riverside (15) and Cal State Fullerton (11).

#### Men's Soccer Coaches Poll Results

No.	School	Pts.
1.	UC Santa Barbara (6)	47
2.	UC Davis (1)	39
3.	Cal Poly	38
4.	Cal State Northridge	26
5.	UC Irvine	20
6.	UC Riverside	15
7.	Cal State Fullerton	11

() First-place votes