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University of North Dakota • University of South Dakota • Southern Utah (Football) • Texas-Pan American • Utah Valley

South Dakota Chosen to Win Inaugural Great West Basketball Championship

Tyler Cain Selected as Preseason Player of the Year

NAPERVILLE, Ill. -- The University of South Dakota has been selected to win the inaugural Great West Conference Men's Basketball Championship by a vote of league coaches.

The Coyotes, who finished 20-9 a year ago, received 41 points, including three first-place votes and are led by Preseason Player of the Year, Tyler Cain. Cain, a senior forward, posted 15.4 points, 11.0 rebounds and 2.8 blocks last season on his way to first team All-Independent honors. He was also named Independent Defensive Player of the Year.

Utah Valley University finished second in the balloting with 38 points and two first-place votes. Following the Wolverines were Chicago State with 35 points and North Dakota with 26 points with each receiving one first-place vote.

Rounding out the poll were Houston Baptist with 23 points, NJIT with 17 points and Texas-Pan American with 16 points.

Joining Cain on the Preseason All-Conference First Team were Carl Montgomery from Chicago State, NJIT's Jheryl Wilson, UTPA's Nick Weiermiller and Louie Krogman from South Dakota.

On the second team were UVU's Jordan Swarbrick, USD's Roman Gentry, UND's Travis Bledsoe and Travis Mertens and NJIT's Isaiah Wilkerson.

Honorable Mention selections were HBU's Mario Flaherty and Wendell Preadom, NJIT's Gary Garris, Chicago State's Jon Montgomery and UTPA's Nathan Hawkins and Ben Smith.

Great West Conference Men's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll

Team (First-Place Votes)	Points
1. South Dakota (3)	41
2. Utah Valley (2)	38
3. Chicago State (1)	35
4. North Dakota (1)	26
5. Houston Baptist	23
6. NJIT	17
7. Texas-Pan American	16

Preseason All-Great West Conference

First Team

Tyler Cain, USD (Player of the Year)
Carl Montgomery, CSU
Jheryl Wilson, NJIT
Nick Weiermiller, UTPA
Louis Krogman, USD

Honorable Mention: Mario Flaherty, HBU; Wendell Preadom, HBU; Gary Garris, NJIT; Nathan Hawkins, UTPA; Jon Montgomery, CSU; Ben Smith, UTPA.

Second Team

Jordan Swarbrick, UVU
Travis Bledsoe, UND
Roman Gentry, USD
Travis Mertens, UND
Isaiah Wilkerson, NJIT

South Dakota returns three starters and seven lettermen for coach Dave Boots. Boots, who is in his 22nd season at USD, has 558 career wins, with 443 of those at USD. In addition to Cain's 15.4 points and 11.0 rebounds per game last year, Krogman scored 12.8 points per game, pulled down 4.2 rebounds and dished out 2.6 assists. Gentry returns 12.2 ppg, 4.2 rpg and 2.6 apg from last season.

Utah Valley, under the direction of coach Dick Hunsaker, returns seven lettermen from last season's 17-11 team, including second-team selection Swarbrick who averaged 7.5 points, 4.4 rebounds and 2.8 assists per game a year ago.

Recording its first winning season in 23 years, Chicago State finished last year with a 19-13 record and returns one starter, Carl Montgomery. The junior forward posted 11 points, 7.2 rebounds and 1.9 blocks for coach Benjy Taylor who enters his third season at the helm of the Cougars.

Brian Jones, in his fourth season as North Dakota's coach, returns one

starter and six lettermen from a 2008-09 team that went 16-12. Second-team selections Bledsoe and Mertens return 10.7 ppg and 9.1 ppg, respectively.

HBU lost 90 percent of its offense from last season and returns only one starter and two lettermen from a 5-25 team. Coach Ron Cottrell, who enters his 19th season with 379 career wins, will rely on center Flaherty, who registered 6.3 points and 3.3 rebounds from last year, and top newcomer Preadom.

NJIT and UTPA each return four starters from last season. First-team honoree Wilson (12.6 ppg) and second-team selection Wilkerson (12.5 ppg) will lead in the backcourt for coach Jim Engles as NJIT looks to improve on last season's 1-30 mark. First-year UTPA coach Ryan Marks will rely on first-team selection Weiermiller (10.7 ppg) and Hawkins (9.7 ppg) to build on the Broncs' 10-17 record from a year ago.

The season will culminate at the Great West Tournament on March 10-13, 2010, at Orem, Utah, with the champion receiving a bid to the CollegenInsider.com Postseason Tournament.