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SAN DIEGO AND PEPPERDINE PICKED AS FAVORITES IN WCC PRESEASON BASEBALL POLL

SAN BRUNO, CA - San Diego and Pepperdine were picked as favorites to win this year's WCC regular season title in the 2009 preseason baseball poll, as voted on by the head coaches in the conference. The Toreros and Waves have already been receiving several preseason accolades by several publications as San Diego has been ranked as high as No. 11 by *Baseball America*, while Pepperdine was ranked No. 17 in the same poll. San Diego and Pepperdine both received 45 points, with the Toreros receiving four first place votes to three for the Waves. Santa Clara, which has received votes in several preseason publications, was picked to finish third with 35 points. Gonzaga received the last remaining first place vote, and received 30 points, to come in at fourth place, edging out San Francisco, which received 26 points, for fifth place. Rounding out this year's poll are Loyola Marymount, with 20 points, Saint Mary's, with 14 points, and Portland, with nine points.

San Diego is coming off its second straight WCC Championship and a strong run in last year's NCAA tournament, when it went 3-2 in the opening round, losing to eventual College World Series champion, Fresno State in the regional championship. Head Coach Rich Hill returns several players to a team that led the league in team ERA and strikeouts, in Team USA gold medalist AJ Griffin (JR., RHP), Kyle Blair (SO., RHP), and Sammy Solis (SO., LHP), who have all been named to the Brooks Wallace Award watch list. Other notable returners are first-team All-WCC performer James Meador (JR., OF), All-WCC honorable mention honorees Kevin Muno (JR., OF) and Jose Valerio (SR., 1B).

Pepperdine is coming off a runner-up finish in last season's WCC Championship Series and went 2-2 in the opening round of last year's NCAA Tournament, losing to host Stanford in the championship game of the regional. The Waves were one of the better offensive teams in the WCC last season, leading the league in runs scored, doubles, and triples. Head Coach Steve Rodriguez returns 19 letterwinners and six position starters. Highlighting the list of returnees is Nick Gaudi (JR., RHP), who was named a 2009 second-team preseason All-American by the NCBWA. The Waves also return a number of players from last season's All-WCC first team in Ryan Heroy (SR., 1B), Bryce Mendonca (SR., 3B), and Nathan Newman (SR., RHP).

Santa Clara, led by Head Coach Mark O'Brien, returns several key players from a team that led the league in team batting average, while ranking 19th in the country. Headlining the list of bats returning for the Broncos are Tommy Medica (JR., C), Jon Karcich (JR., SS), and Brady Fuerst (SR., 2B), who were all members of last year's All-WCC first team, and Matt Long (SR., OF), an All-WCC honorable mention. Santa Clara will also be returning last year's WCC Freshman of the Year, Thain Simon (SO., RHP), who was named to this year's Brooks Wallace Award watch list and a second team pre-season All-American by *Collegiate Baseball*.

Gonzaga finished fifth in last year's WCC standings and Head Coach Mark Machtolf will return all his players from last year's all-conference team in Drew Heid (JR., OF), an All-WCC first team member, and Matt Fields (SR., RHP), Cody Martin (SO., RHP), and Evan Wells (SR., 2B), who all received honorable mentions. Head Coach Nino Giarratano of San Francisco will return two members of last year's WCC All-Freshman team in Connor Bernatz (SO., OF) and Matt Lujan (SO., LHP), who was also named to the Brooks Wallace Award Watch list. Loyola Marymount will be led by first year Head Coach Jason Gill and return All-WCC first team members Angelo Songco (JR., OF) and Ryan Wheeler (JR., 1B), who was also named to the Brooks Wallace Award Watch list. Saint Mary's Head Coach Jedd Soto will return Kyle Jensen (JR., OF), an All-WCC first team member who was also named to the Brooks Wallace Award Watch list. Portland Head Coach Chris Sperry will return Riley Henricks (SO., SS), who was also an All-WCC first team member and named to the Brooks Wallace Award Watch list.

2009 WCC Baseball Preseason Poll

1. San Diego - 45 (4)
Pepperdine - 45 (3)
3. Santa Clara - 35
4. Gonzaga - 30 (1)
5. San Francisco - 26
6. Loyola Marymount - 20
7. Saint Mary's - 14
8. Portland - 9

(First place votes)