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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 24, 2010

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SAN DIEGO PICKED AS THE FAVORITE IN WCC PRESEASON BASEBALL POLL

SAN BRUNO, CA - San Diego was picked as the favorite to win this year's WCC regular season title in the 2010 preseason baseball poll, as voted on by the head coaches in the conference. The Toreros received six first place votes for a total of 48 points and are ranked 24th in *Collegiate Baseball's* preseason poll. Pepperdine was picked second with 38 points and is also receiving national recognition, ranked 34th in the *Collegiate Baseball's* preseason poll. San Francisco totaled 33 points for third, while 2009 WCC Champion Gonzaga got one first place vote for 29 points to finish fourth, just edging out 2009 runner-up Loyola Marymount, which received 28 points for fifth. Rounding out this year's preseason poll are Santa Clara, which received the last first place vote with 20 points, Saint Mary's with 17 points, and Portland with 11 points.

San Diego is coming off a fifth place finish last year and return a number of key players, including 2009 WCC Player of the Year James Meador (SR, OF), and 2009 All-WCC first team members Zach Walters (JR, 3B) and AJ Griffin (SR, RHP), who also made the preseason all-conference team. In addition, Head Coach Rich Hill, who is the league's all-time leader in WCC victories (246), will bring back Kevin Munro (JR, OF) and Kyle Blair (JR, RHP), who were both named to the preseason all-conference team. In all, San Diego, which led the league in batting average (.319), brings back eight starting position players and four pitchers.

Pepperdine, under Head Coach Steve Rodriguez, finished tied for third last year and led the league in strikeouts (477), opposing batting average (.240), and were tied for the lead in saves (12) and earned runs allowed (237). The Waves' returners will be highlighted by Matt Bywater (JR, LHP), a 2009 All-WCC first team selection, and Cole Cook (SO, RHP) and Brian Humphries (SO, OF), who were both named to last year's all-freshman team. Cook was also named a Louisville Slugger Freshman All-American last year.

San Francisco tied for third last year and will be led by 12th year Head Coach Nino Giarratano, who was named an assistant coach for the 2010 USA Baseball Collegiate National Team. The Dons return 23 letterwinners, including 2009 All-WCC first team members Derek Poppert (SR, SS) and Doug Murray (SR, RHP), who led the league in wins going 9-0. In addition, junior infielder Stephen Yarrow was named to the preseason all-conference team.

Gonzaga, fresh off its first ever regular season and WCC Championship Series title, is led by 2009 WCC Coach of the Year, Mark Machtolf. The Zags will field a young team as they return three position starters and three pitchers, highlighted by Drew Heid (SR, OF), who was the 2009 Alaska Summer League MVP, and Cody Martin (JR, RHP), who tied for second in the league with six saves. Loyola Marymount, which finished second last year under first year Head Coach Jason Gill, returns four position starters and three pitchers, led by 2009 All-WCC first team selection Jonathan Johnson (JR, 2B) and all-freshman team members Ryan Hawthorne (SO, OF) and Shon Roe (SO, INF). Santa Clara, under Head Coach Mark O'Brien, returns five starting position players and eight pitchers, led by 2009 All-WCC first team members Geoff Klein (SR, C), who tied for the league lead in batting average (.379), and Nate Garcia (SR, RHP), who led the league in strikeouts (96), as well as Tommy Medica, who was named to the preseason all-conference team. Saint Mary's, led by Head Coach Jedd Soto, will be led by the 2009 WCC Freshman of the Year, Troy Channing, who became just the third player in WCC history to win the Triple Crown and was a second-team All-American. Portland returns eight starting position players and two starting pitchers under Head Coach Chris Sperry. Highlighting the returnees are 2009 All-Freshman team selection Kris Kauppila (SO, SS), and Zach Varce (JR, RHP), who tied for the league lead in saves with nine.

2010 WCC Baseball Preseason Poll

1. San Diego - 48 (6)
2. Pepperdine - 38
3. San Francisco - 33
4. Gonzaga - 29 (1)
5. Loyola Marymount - 28
6. Santa Clara - 20 (1)
7. Saint Mary's - 17
8. Portland - 11

(First place votes)

Preseason All-Conference Teams

Position Players

Troy Channing, SMC
 Drew Heid, GON
 Riley Henricks, POR
 Brian Humphries, PEP
 Kris Kauppila, POR
 Geoff Klein, SCU
 James Meador, USD
 Tommy Medica, SCU
 Kevin Munro, USD
 Zach Walters, USD
 Stephen Yarrow, USF

Pitchers

Kyle Blair, USD
 Matt Bywater, PEP
 Cole Cook, PEP
 AJ Griffin, USD
 Doug Murray, USF