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MOUNTAIN PACIFIC SPORTS FEDERATION

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UCLA TOPS 2005 MPSF PRESEASON WATER POLO COACHES' POLL

UCLA topped the first MPSF Preseason Men's Water Polo Coaches' Poll. The Bruins are returning as the reigning 2004 MPSF and NCAA Champions. No. 2 CALIFORNIA finished last season sixth in the MPSF, but the coaches obviously feel the Bears will contend for the Federation championship. USC starts the preseason where they ended in 2004, in third position with STANFORD earning the No. 4 spot. The Cardinal finished last season runner-up to UCLA in both the MPSF and NCAA tournaments. Pepperdine was voted No. 5 after finishing seventh in '04, followed by No.6 LONG BEACH STATE, No. 7 UC IRVINE, No. 8 PACIFIC, and No. 9 UC SANTA BARBARA.

Rank	Team	Points	2004 team record:	2004 MPSF finish:
No. 1	UCLA	75 points (5 first-place votes)	25-3 (8-0 MPSF)	#1
No. 2	California	71 points (2 first-place votes)	20-10 (3-5 MPSF)	#6
No. 3	USC	64 points (1 first-place vote)	22-5 (5-3 MPSF)	#3
No. 4	Stanford	53 points	23-5 (7-1 MPSF)	#2
No. 5	Pepperdine	49 points (1 first-place vote)	15-14 (3-5 MPSF)	#7
No. 6	Long Beach State	37 points	18-12 (4-4 MPSF)	#4
No. 7	UC Irvine	28 points	16-14 (4-4 MPSF)	#5
No. 8	Pacific	22 points	7-18 (0-8 MPSF)	#9
No. 9	UC Santa Barbara	10 points	18-14 (2-6 MPSF)	#8

No. 1: UCLA 25-3 (8-0 MPSF 2004) – UCLA enters the 2005 campaign with a difficult road to repeat as NCAA Champions. The Bruins, who won the program's eighth national title in 2004, will be without all seven starters from last year's squad but return a solid core of young, yet experienced players. The returners, which include seniors **David Pietsch** and **John Blanchette**, will be hard-pressed to match last season's historical record of 25-3 but they do have history on their side - all but one of UCLA's national titles have come as part of a back-to-back championship run ('69, '71-'72, '95-'96, '99-'00, '04-??). Seventh-year Head Coach **Adam Krikorian**, who has now won more NCAA men's titles than any other active water polo coach, will have three goalkeepers to choose from to replace departed senior All-American **Joseph Axelrad**. **Will Didinger**, **Matt Kellogg** and true freshman **Chay Lapin** are all in the mix for time in front of the net. Assisting the offensive attack will be sophomore attacker **Matt Jacobs**, who is returning after a stellar freshman campaign which saw him notch 13 goals. Pietsch and junior **Chris Pulido** will anchor the defense from the Center Defender position.

No. 2: CALIFORNIA 20-10 (3-5 MPSF 2004) – Cal should be a strong contender for the program's 12 NCAA title, featuring returning junior All-America standouts **John Mann** (team-leading 60 goals, first team All-American), **Andrija Vasiljevic** (39 goals, honorable mention All-American) and **Marty Matthies** (team's top defender, 14 goals, honorable mention All-American). The Bears also return senior goalie **Nate Bennett**, who recorded 216 saves in 29 matches last season, and junior attacker **Brian Bacharach**, who was second on the team in scoring last season with 48 goals. Cal also brings in freshman standout **Shea Buckner**, a 6-3 center defender from Villa Park High School, the 2004 CIF Division II Player of the Year and a member of the USA Senior National Team.

No. 3: USC 22-5 (5-3 MPSF 2004) – The USC men's water polo team returns a heavy load of talent for its 2005 campaign, including top scorer **Juraj Zatovic** and goalie **Don Ricci**. Head coach **Jovan Vavic** also added key new talent that will further the Trojans' defensive abilities to compliment the offensive sparks of Zatovic and **Juan Delgadillo**. All told, the USC men are stocked with talent to improve on last season's third-place finish in the MPSF and work toward adding a 2005 NCAA championship to their list.

No. 4: STANFORD 23-5 (7-1 MPSF 2004) – Despite losing four-time Player of the Year **Tony Azevedo** to graduation, the Cardinal will still have plenty of firepower. The Cardinal returns the second and third leading scorers from last year, **Thomas Hopkins** who scored 60 goals and **Peter Varellas** who tallied 56. Also returning is **Tyler Drake** who scored 23 goals last year. The Cardinal will be inexperienced in goal with the graduation of Chad Taylor, who gained All-American honors last year. Taylor had one year of eligibility remaining, but decided not to return.

No. 5: PEPPERDINE 15-14 (3-5 MPSF 2004) – Expectations are high for Pepperdine in 2005. The Waves return fifth-year senior **Jesse Smith** who sat out last season after competing in the Olympic Games in Athens, Greece. Pepperdine head coach **Terry Schroeder**, who is entering his 19th season at the helm of the Wave's, feels he has the best collegiate player in the country in Smith. Also back after redshirting the 2004 season is West Valley Junior College transfer **Ben Tait**. Tait should have the inside track in goal. Pepperdine also returns its leading scorer of a year ago in **Grant Miller**. The La Verne, Calif., native netted 50 goals as a freshman from the guard position. Left-handed **Adam Hewko** will be another solid player. The Waves have a strong starting seven but Schroeder thinks the key to the 2005 season lies in the team's depth.

No. 6: LONG BEACH STATE 18-12 (4-4 MPSF 2004) – Seventh-year Head Coach **Ricardo Azevedo** seems to have all the pieces in place this year as the 49ers look to make a legitimate run at the 2005 MPSF title. With 18 letter-winners and six starters returning from last year's 17-12 club, the 49ers will be a legitimate threat to win it all in '05. Senior **Brett McCleave**, the 2004 MPSF Newcomer of the Year, returns for his second year after leading the 49ers with 50 goals last year. Toss in returning starters **Reid Tomassi** (41 goals), **Jay Gerardi** (34 goals) and **Brad Scoles** (31 goals) and the 49ers return their top four scorers from last year. In addition, **Eric Geoffroy**, who missed last year due to injury, returns for his senior campaign. Geoffroy was a third team All-American in 2003 after leading the squad in scoring with 65 goals. In goal, senior **Thomas Onyshko** looks to close out his stellar career with a strong finish. Onyshko led the

MPSF last year in saves per game at 8.03, including a career-best 17 saves in a win at UCSB last season. He currently ranks third all-time at LBSU with 566 career goalie saves. The 49ers look to have their deepest club in many years and look to improve on last season's fourth place league finish.

No. 7: UC IRVINE 16-14 (4-4 MPSF 2004) – **Marc Hunt** assumes the head-coaching duties at UC Irvine this season, but former head coach **Ted Newland**, a legend with 714 wins in the past 39 seasons, will be at Hunt's side in a supporting role as assistant coach. Senior **Dreaseon Barry** leads the Anteaters after earning second team All-MPSF and All-American honors last season when he led UCI with 65 goals. Junior **Tim Hutten** notched 22 goals in 2004 and senior **Joe Wynne** returns in goal after recording 229 saves in 30 starts last season. The Anteaters were fourth in the final national poll last season.

No. 8: PACIFIC 7-18 (0-8 MPSF 2004) – The University of the PACIFIC returns 13 players from a year ago, including eight of their top nine scorers. This group is led by All-American sophomore **Dragan Bakic**, who notched 31 goals in just 18 matches a year ago. Junior **Matthew Turnbull** (29 goals) represented his home country of Australia in the World University Games in Izmir, Turkey. Pacific will have a trio of seniors on the squad, in goalkeeper **Marko Popovic** (126 saves), center-forward **Will McLaughlin** (9 goals), and utility player **Adam Zobler** (24 goals). Team captain, junior **Clint McLaughlin**, was the team's most versatile player a year ago, scoring 20 goals from several different positions. The Tigers will gain some roster depth as the incoming recruiting class of 19 student-athletes (18 freshmen and one junior) will give Pacific 32 active players on the roster.

No. 9: UC SANTA BARBARA 18-14 (2-6 MPSF 2004) – The 2005 UC Santa Barbara water polo team will have a handful of key returnees, but the most significant development for the program has been the addition of new head coach **Wolf Wigo**. Wigo, a Stanford graduate, was the 1994 NCAA Player of the Year after leading the Cardinal to the National Championship. He was a member of the U.S. Olympic team in 1996, 2000 and 2004 and he is a three-time USA Water Polo Male Athlete of the Year. Now, Wigo faces a new challenge. The Gauchos lose their top two scorers from a 2004 team that went 18-14. Junior driver **Ross Sinclair** (30 goals) and senior driver **Ramiro Saldain** (28 goals) will be counted on heavily for offensive contributions. Sophomore utility **Robert Bauer** scored 19 goals in 2004 and should also be expected to take the next step. Defensively, UCSB will look to senior goalkeeper **Jon Bonafede** who averaged 10.65 saves per match and posted a 7.18 goals against average in 2004.

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