

SPORTS

NEVADA (RENO) JOINS THE BIG WEST AND DIVISION 1-A

Sentinel Voice

The 1992 football season will showcase a new look for the Big West Conference. Charter members Fresno St. and Long Beach St. are departing while former Division 1-AA powerhouse, Nevada, will make their Division 1-A debut this year.

The new look represents the conference's first membership change since 1983, when New Mexico St. joined the circuit.

The conference strengthened its commitment to Division 1-A football by adding Nevada, which was the 1990 NCAA national runner-up and the nation's top-ranked 1-A program throughout the 1991 regular season.

Big West teams will go head-to-head against the nation's top teams with the majority of the non-conference schedule being played against Pacific-10 and Western Athletic Conference schools. There will also be non-conference contests against Big Eight, SEC, Big Ten and South-

west Conference schools.

Eight Bowl teams from 1992- Washington, California, UCLA, Georgia, Stanford, BYU, Fresno St., and Baylor-are included on Big West teams' schedules this year.

San Jose St.- After 15 seasons as an assistant coach, 38-year-old Ron Turner will commence his first season as head coach of the Spartans this year. Quarterback Jeff Garcia, the nation's top returning pass effi-

ciency leader, will direct the Spartan offense. Garcia started three games in 1991, but still passed for 1,519 yards and 12 TDs while completing 61.9% of his passes. There are a number of talented prospects ready to compete for running back to take the place of Shon Ellerbe. Donald Lindsey and Nathan Dupree battled for the No. 1 tail-back job in Spring practice.

Heading up the defensive unit is returning first team All-Big West linebacker Raymond Bowles, who recorded 9.5 sacks and 19.5 tackles from behind the line of scrimmage in 1991. Anthony Washington, a two-time all-conference pick at safety keys the secondary charge.

"I'm excited about coming in as head coach," Turner said, at the annual BWC Media Day. "I think we have a good chance, but so do alot of other teams. Our goal is to get to the Las Vegas Bowl-and win it."



RAYMOND BOWLES



RYAN BENJAMIN

Vargas to lead the potent offense. The two combined for a school-record 3,578 passing yards and 27 touchdowns in 1991. Nevada has its two top receivers back in juniors Bryan Reeves and Chris Singleton.

Defensively, Nevada's secondary is as good as they come. Cornerback Forey Duckett is regarded as one of the best DBs on the West Coast. Senior outside linebacker Andre Howard and Senior defensive tackle Joe Caspers will be the only starters returning in the front.

"The expectations are high for us," expressed Ault. "The transfer is great for the community and the institution. I expect us to be very competitive in the conference."

Pacific- A year ago the Tigers recorded their first winning (4-3) Big West season since 1978. This year they return three All-American candidates in RB Ryan Benjamin, WR Aaron Turner and QB Troy Kopp. Benjamin was a first-year All-American last year, rushing for 1,581 yards and led the nation with 2,996 all purpose yards. Kopp set a Big West record by passing for 3,767 yards and an NCAA-high 37 TDs last year. Turner led the nation with 1,604 receiving yards and a 145.8 yards per game avg.

If Pacific plans on contending for the BWC title, they'll need improvement with their defense. New head coach, Chuck Shelton, has stated, "without question, (the defense) is our top priority. "Some may say that the Tigers defense is as bad as their offense is good. Shawn Price-an honorable mention All-Big West linebacker, Grant Carter a second team all-league pick and two-year starter Eric Bengston will key their defensive attack.

"You win championships with defense," commented Shelton. "We're not big, but we're very tough. We probaly have the two best defensive ends in the conference. The secondary has a chance."

Next Week: **USU, UNLV, NMSU and CSF**



FRED GATLIN

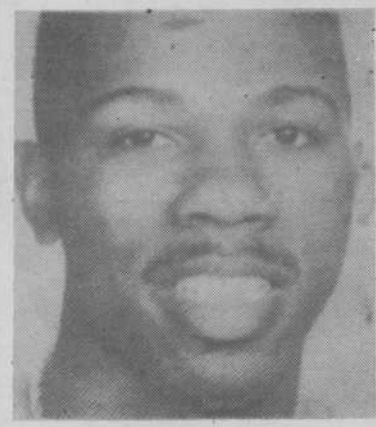
Nevada-In 16 seasons at UN, Head Coach Chris Ault has compiled a 138-53-1 record while taking the Wolfpack to the playoffs seven times. The Pack, 12-1 a year-ago, will count on quarterbacks Fred Gatlin and Chris

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