

WITH AN OPEN SHOT AT THE CONFERENCE CROWN THE BIG WEST IS SET FOR EXCITING BASKETBALL

By W.G. Ramirez

"Half the polls have us winning the conference, that's a new thing."

New Mexico State's Head Coach Neil McCarthy summed it up perfect. Its definitely a new thing in the Big West Conference with four teams looking like true contenders for the conference title.

Ordinarily an automatic pre-season favorite, the UNLV Runnin' Rebels will have their hands full trying to remain the conference's force.

At Wednesday's BWC Media Day, New Mexico State was chosen as the preseason favorite by the media with 529 votes, 30 first-place votes. UNLV ran a close second with 524 votes, 24 first-place votes. In the coaches poll, both teams tied for first with 91 votes, 6 first-place votes going to NMSU, 4 to UNLV.

The other two contenders in the conference this year look to be UC Santa Barbara and Long Beach St.

NMSU will return three starters to an explosive offense led by All-American candidate Sam Crawford. Last season he averaged 12.9 points per game complemented by a 4.5-1 ratio for turnovers and assists. The 5-8 sensation is touted as one of the nation's premier point guards dishing out a school-record 282 assists averaging 8.5 per game, second best in the nation.

Joining Crawford will be steady power forward Eric Traylor who led the Aggies in the Big West Tournament championship game, against Pacific, with 19 points and 11 rebounds. Traylor was the leading scorer for the Aggies in 8 games last season.

Voted as NMSU's Most Im-



Shown at Midnight Madness are the '92-93 Runnin' Rebels and new Head Coach Rollie Massimino

proved Player, Las Vegas native Cliff Reed will be right there with Traylor, playing an aggressive game underneath. Reed loves to storm the glass with thunderous dunks; an instant ignition for all the Aggie fans in the Pan American Center.

UNLV will also return three starters, not to mention having possibly the best forward tandem in All-Big West candidates Evric Gray and J.R. Rider. Dexter Boney will accent the offensive attack with his keen eye from the perimeter. All three players are extremely dangerous when having a hot hand in the same game. Junior point guard Dedan Thomas will replace H. Waldman, who transferred to St. Louis. All-Big West Freshman member Reggie Manuel seems to have the nod at the other guard position. If Head Coach Rollie Massimino opts for a three-guard offense, Rebels fans will get a closer look at the highly touted prep All-America recruit Lawrence Thomas from Elizabeth, N.J. The Rebels main problem will be underneath. Until last week,

Massimino seemed as if he would mend that problem with 6'9" Danny Griffin. Last Friday Griffin was diagnosed with a partial tear of his patella tendon in his right knee. He is speculated to be out for at least two or three weeks. When asked what his solution was, Massimino promptly replied, "We'll just have to deal with it."

Although UC Santa Barbara lost Big West Player of the Year Lucious Davis, Head Coach Jerry Pimm is still confident that his Gauchos will be able to contend for the BWC title.

Their schedule is tailor-made for a developing team. Pimm will be using 6 freshman to help



Jerry Pimm

offset the loss of Davis. 1991 Los Angeles AAA Player of the Year Rob Ramaker will head the list of first-year Gauchos. Doug Muse, the Big West's Freshman of the Year last season, gives UC Santa Barbara a shot-blocking center with unique ball handling skills underneath the basket. Idris Jones, the Gauchos No. 2 scorer last season, will be UCSB's top 3-point threat. With NMSU concentrating on taking over UNLV's reign, who in turn will be trying to hold on to it, the Gauchos just may slip by both the Aggies and the Rebels to become the best team in the league by March.

The fourth true contender may be down in Long Beach, California where the 49ers will return four starters, including their three top scorers. Joining the Rebels' Rider as an NBA prospect, will be 49er senior guard Lucious Harris. Head Coach Seth Greenberg said he felt really good about this year's squad. On Harris, Greenberg said, "He is a magnificent player

(See Big West, Page 20



Las Vegas native Cliff Reed loves to ignite home crowds with thunderous dunks. Reed will start at forward for NMSU

As the
basketball
season
tips-off—
so does a
new era
at UNLV.



Rollie Massimino and the Runnin' Rebels plan to prove to the nation that there is life after a "Shark Attack".



On Thursday, November 19, the Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice will publish their first-ever sports pull-out section —

THE 1992-93 "HOOPREVIEW"

This special section will feature your own Runnin' Rebels, our exclusive Preseason Top 20 and feature stories on contending schools from around the nation.

Don't forget to meet the November 17th deadline and get your special advertisement rate. Put it in black and white and reach over 30,000 readers.

Contact Willie at 383-4030 or 594-7594.

As 1992 winds down, its time for you to:

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE UNLV 1992 AFRICAN-AMERICAN ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

- Tony Allick - swimming
- Henry Bailey - football
- Danny Barber - soccer
- Evric Gray - basketball
- John Ma'ae - football
- Rodney Mazon - football/baseball
- Shannon McLean - football
- J.R. Rider - basketball
- Elmore Spencer - basketball
- Demond Thompkins - football/baseball

The top 5 vote-getters as well as the ladies' finalists will be released for voting on

December 3rd. Voting will continue through January 13, 1993. Winners will be announced January 14, 1993. Please drop off or mail your ballot to:

"Athlete Of the Year"
c/o Sports Dept.
1201 S. Eastern Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89104-2007