

# IT COULD BE TIME FOR A CHANGE IN THE BIG WEST

This season there will be many new things happening in the Big West. Lots of changes.

Jim Haney is gone from the commissioner's post, Fresno St. has packed up and moved on to the WAC, replacing the Bulldogs will be Nevada, Jerry Tarkanian is kickin' it at the alamo, former Villanova coach Rollie Massimino is now enjoying Philly Cheese Steaks down on Maryland Parkway, here in Las Vegas, and in the most significant change of all, the Aggies of New Mexico St. are being favored to capture the Big West title over long time reigning champ UNLV.

"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 preseason favorite, the UNLV Runnin' Rebels will have their hands full trying to remain the conference's force.

At the 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.



Rollie Massimino takes over the helm at UNLV this season with the Runnin' Rebels.

**UNLV:** Massimino swears he will keep the Rebels runnin' this season, as he takes over the winningest team of the '90's. UNLV may lack size, and many think they lack depth, but quickness is something everyone will see in this squad. Senior J.R. Rider, who figures to be a lottery pick in next year's NBA draft, and senior Evric Gray will be an unstoppable duo that will dominate the court. Dexter Boney should shine from the outside with his sharp eye for the bottom of the net. Dedan Thomas and Reggie Manuel should succeed in the backcourt. Both guards will have ample time to rest with prep All-American recruit Lawrence Thomas coming off of the bench. Don't count the Runnin' Rebels out just yet.

**New Mexico St.:** Head Coach Neil McCarthy will return three starters from last season's Sweet 16 squad in All-America candidate Sam Crawford, 6-7 forward Eric Traylor and 6-5 forward Cliff Reed. Crawford, a 5-8 guard, is exceptionally quick, extremely dangerous and is the nation's top returning assist man (8.5 per game). Crawford's sharp passes to Reed or Traylor will baffle defenders in the paint. One thing McCarthy will be focusing on, is the status of forward Tracey Ware. If the senior forward returns to his '90-'91 form, after reconstructive knee surgery, UNLV better watch its back.

**UC Santa Barbara:** With three seniors on the roster, Head Coach Jerry Pimm will have his

Gauchos primed to make a serious run at the conference title. 6-10 sophomore Doug Muse will give the Gauchos something the rest of the league lacks, power under the basket. Muse can block shots, rebound, with authority, and handle the ball underneath. Pimm's main concern will be to replace the scoring of Big West Player of the Year, Lucious Davis. Ray Kelly and Idris Jones should start in the backcourt for UCSB, although Michael Meyer will see plenty of starting time at off-guard, either starting or coming in as the sixth man. Incidentally, Jones was arguably the league's top sixth man last season.



All-America candidate Lucious Harris

**Long Beach State:** Thanks to 6-6 guard Lucious Harris, the 49ers could be the darkhorse in the BWC this season. Head Coach Seth Greenberg turned a dismal 11-17 record around and carried LBSU to an 18-12 record, last season, and an NIT berth. Greenberg will have three players to choose from for the point guard spot. Rod Hannibal and transfer Brian Camper would seem to be the frontrunners, then again Jeff Rogers could challenge the both of them. Defense is where LBSU will need to concentrate if they plan on contending for the league title.

**Utah State:** The Aggies posted their first winning record since the 1987-88 season last year. Utah St. has lost All-Big West off-guard Kendall Youngblood. Head Coach Kohn Smith will look to his big frontcourt to compensate for the loss of the multi-talented Youngblood. They return 6 lettermen, including three starters. Carlito De Silva and Nathan Wickizer will be dominative in the middle while reserve Rod Hay will be anxiously awaiting to come in off the bench. The key to the Aggies' success though, will remain behind the leadership and playmaking abilities of point guard Jay Goodman.

**UC Irvine:** Without a doubt, the Anteaters will have the biggest turnaround in the league. Many are anticipating that Head Coach Rod Baker's newcomers will be able to come in and shake things up at Irvine. Three four-year school transfers, along with two juco transfers and one of California's top prep recruits invade the Anteaters roster. Senior forward Jeff Von Lutzow, UCI's top scorer (12.5 avg.) and rebounder (5.7 avg) last season, will finally come into his own and prove that he is one of the premier players on the West coast as well as the BWC. Von Lutzow, a do-it-all type player, will need to bring all of his potential out by game time to spark UCI. Besides scoring and rebounding, Von Lutzow turned in a team-leading 23 blocked shots while nailing 33 3-pointers last season for a 35.9% 3-pt. avg.

**Nevada:** Unlike the Wolfpack's dominating football team, the basketball 'Pack holds a 61-110 record against Big West teams. They won't ex-

actly falter in their first year in the BWC, but it'll definitely be a learning experience for the squad and Head Coach Len Stevens. Their frontcourt may boast the league's top center in Ric Herrin. A 6'10" senior, Herrin can plan on being drafted next June. What the Wolfpack will really need is a genuine backcourt. The loss of scoring tandem Brian Thomasson and Kevin Soares leaves Nevada looking for plugs to fill the holes.

**Pacific:** The Tigers have lost three of their top four scorers from last season and will look to junior Glenn Griffin and seniors Tony "the Tiger" Amundsen and Robert Richardson. Amundsen is the leading returning scorer and will need to be extremely productive this season to kick the Tigers' offense in gear. Griffin and Richardson will be looked upon as the role players underneath. Both frontcourt threats will have to join Amundsen in the productive category if the Tigers plan on having any kind of offensive attack. Charles Terrell, formerly of San Jose State, transfers to Pacific from Chabot JC in Hayward, California, where he sat out last year. He was kicked off of San Jose's team for disciplinary reasons before transferring to Chabot and redshirting. Terrell will offer a supporting role in the scoring department.

**Cal-State Fullerton:** The Titan's will welcome new coach, Brad Holland to the helm. The former Laker player and UCLA assistant will have three returning starters on his team, including All-Big West Second Team senior Bruce Bowen. He will be counted on to provide leadership and scoring. Bowen will also take advantage of his uncanny style of defensive play, sizing up to anybody, anywhere on the court. Also returning from the



Big West Player of the Year candidate NMSU guard Sam Crawford

Titans' starting lineup will be Sean Williams and Aaron Sunderland. Williams is an extremely strong rebounder that can score the points off of his offensive boards. Sunderland, the Titans' point guard will be joined in the backcourt by juco redshirt Dijon Bernard.

**San Jose State:** Like Nevada, the Spartans' success from the gridiron will not run over on to the b-ball court although they may show some improvement from last years squad: a team that won 2 games the whole season. At Media Day, Head Coach Stan Morrison stated, "I feel like I'm always saying this, but, it seems like we're starting over." Well coach it's probably because for the fourth year in a row, you are. Jason Allen and Kevin Logan are the only returning starters for the Spartans. They will be joined by returnees and part-time starters from last year, Joe Frenchwood, Thomas Clayton, Daryl Scott and Alfonso De I. a Nuez. Avoiding any injuries, the SJSU will be vying for their first 10-win season in five years.

## UNLV VS. RUSSIA

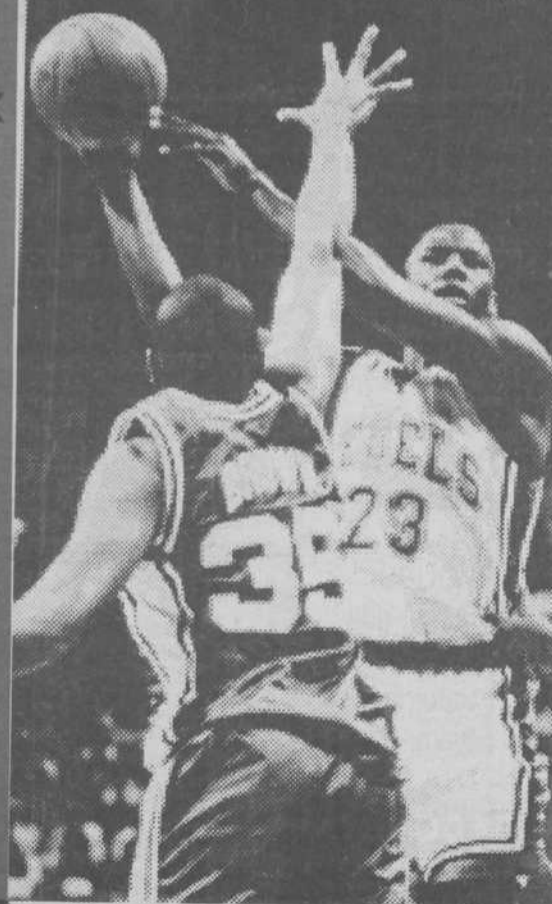
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