



BIG WEST CONFERENCE

2 Corporate Park, Suite 206, Irvine, CA 92606

Information Contact: Mike Villamor (Assistant Commissioner/External Affairs)
Phone: (949) 261-2525 • **Fax:** (949) 261-2528 • **email:** mvillamor@bigwest.org

For Immediate Release - Tuesday, May 31, 2016

UC San Diego Added As Associate Member

Big West Conference Makes Men's Volleyball 18th Sponsored Sport

IRVINE, CA – The Big West Conference today announced the creation of a men's volleyball championship beginning in 2018, becoming the first NCAA Division I conference to sponsor competition in the sport.

In making the announcement, Big West Commissioner Dennis Farrell noted that men's volleyball will become the 18th sport in which the conference conducts an annual championship.

The Big West Board of Directors approved a six-team league consisting of full conference members CSUN, Long Beach State, UC Irvine, UC Santa Barbara, and Hawai'i. A sixth team from UC San Diego will join the group as an associate member and will give the conference the minimum six teams required for postseason NCAA automatic qualification.

An associate member in the Big West is any institution that participates in three or less conference championships. Other current Big West associate members are CSU Bakersfield in women's beach volleyball and Sacramento State in men's soccer and women's beach volleyball.

Competition for the regular season championship will be contested in a double round-robin format for a total of 10 matches. A six-team, single elimination postseason tournament will be conducted at a campus site one week prior to the NCAA Championship Selections.

"The Big West Conference is thrilled to add a sport that is so popular in our region and is growing on the national level," said Farrell. "Because the NCAA championship is conducted across Divisions I and II, UC San Diego despite its Division II status in its other sports, is eligible to compete in the Big West in this sport.

"It should be noted that the creation of this championship is the culmination of a year's worth of work within the conference that has engaged both the sport's coaches and administrators. UC San Diego's consideration as a member in men's volleyball has been discussed throughout that process and has no relation to its current consideration of Division I membership."

The six programs, which previously have competed in the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation since 1993, come to the newly formed conference having played a prominent role in men's volleyball on the national scene.

The schools have produced five NCAA national championships, 12 runner-up finishes and 26 Final Four appearances since 1970. UC Irvine won four national titles over a seven-year period, including 2007, 2009, 2012 and 2013. Since 2008, five of the conference members have made at least one appearance in the NCAA Championship.

WHAT'S THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THE ADDITION OF BIG WEST MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

UC Irvine Director of Athletics Michael Izzi (Men's Volleyball Ad Hoc Committee Chair)

"Having the Big West Conference establish the first Division I men's volleyball conference was an important step in solidifying a commitment to the sport and the student-athletes that participate.

"The league athletic directors are committed to the highest level of success academically and athletically by our student-athletes. The growth and success of the sport aligns perfectly with the Big West's values and goals. Our teams will be in position to continue to achieve at the highest level every year.

"Since 2002, Big West teams have played in seven NCAA title matches, including UC Irvine who has won four NCAA championships in the last 10 years. These teams have clearly been a force in the sport of men's volleyball and relish the role of leadership and engagement with the sport."

Long Beach State Head Coach Alan Knipe (Men's Volleyball Ad Hoc Committee Member)

"I really believe it's one of the single best things I've seen happen to men's volleyball in all the years I've been a part of it as a player, assistant coach and head coach. I do believe that it's going to give men's volleyball a stronger position to have a traditional conference back our sport. My ultimate goal would be that it would help spur even more growth throughout men's volleyball and within our championship with the NCAA.

"Men's volleyball makes a lot of sense in the Big West. It's a legitimate sport for the Big West to play for national championships and to get the Big West patch on these schools when they're participating. It's a wonderful endorsement by our conference to have faith in what we're doing to our sport that they want to be a part of this. I think it validates 20-30 years of work that men's volleyball coaches within the Big West have been putting in, and I'm super excited about it."

UC Irvine Head Coach David Kniffin

"This is something that has been a dream of men's volleyball for some time. To be a part of the first conference, to take a step in that direction of official growth is exciting for us. It's also exciting to be a part of the first conference in the United States where we actually now offer all three sports, from women's volleyball to sand volleyball to men's volleyball. It's exciting to be part of truly a volleyball conference.

"It's always nice to be able to unify your brand around not just one institution but several institutions. All of the institutions within the Big West as far as men's volleyball goes have demonstrated success over the years."

Hawai'i Head Coach Charlie Wade (Men's Volleyball Ad Hoc Committee Member)

"The Big West is to be commended for their support of Men's Volleyball and their decision to become the first traditional division one conference to sponsor Men's Volleyball. As a coach, I am very appreciative of Dennis Farrell and his leadership team for believing in us and making this happen.

"From its inception the Big West will provide our fans with an exciting and nationally competitive schedule. Five of the six schools have qualified for the NCAA Tournament during the past seven years and continue to be among the nation's best men's volleyball programs."

Kathy DeBoer, American Volleyball Coaches Association Executive Director

"The decision by the Big West to make men's volleyball a conference sport is ground-breaking! For an established DI conference to commit to men's volleyball during these challenging times sends a positive message to the entire Olympic sports community that growth is possible.

"Congrats to all in the Big West for seeing the opportunities in men's volleyball and having the will to make this unprecedented choice!"

BIG WEST MEN'S VOLLEYBALL FACTS

- 5 National Championships
- 12 National Runner-Ups
- 26 Final Four Appearances
- 6 AVCA National Players of the Year
- 7 National Coaches of the Year
- 7 AVCA National Newcomers of the Year
- At least one No. 1 team in 16 of last 18 years

AVCA National Player of the Year

2013 – Taylor Crabb, Long Beach State
2008 – Paul Lotman, Long Beach State (co)
2006 – Jayson Jablonsky, UC Irvine
2003 – Costas Theocharidis, Hawai'i
2001 – Costas Theocharidis, Hawai'i
1996 – Yuval Katz, Hawai'i (co)
1992 – Brent Hilliard, Long Beach State

AVCA National Newcomer of the Year

2016 – TJ DeFalco, Long Beach State
2010 – Jonas Umlauft, Hawai'i
2008 – Cody Loe, CSUN
2006 – Brent Asuka, UC Irvine
2004 – Evan Patak, UC Santa Barbara
2003 – Tyler Hildebrand, Long Beach State
2000 – Costas Theocharidis, Hawai'i

AVCA National Coach of the Year

2006 – John Speraw, UC Irvine
2004 – Alan Knipe, Long Beach State
2002 – Mike Wilton, Hawai'i
1995 – Mike Wilton, Hawai'i
1991 – Ray Ratelle, Long Beach State

ASICS/Volleyball Magazine

National Coach of the Year

2013 – David Kniffin, UC Irvine
2004 – Jeff Campbell, CSUN
2002 – Mike Wilton, Hawai'i
1995 – Mike Wilton, Hawai'i
1993 – John Price, CSUN
1991 – Ray Ratelle, Long Beach State
1990 – Ray Ratelle, Long Beach State

NCAA POSTSEASON

2016 – Long Beach State (national semifinalist)
2015 – UC Irvine (national semifinalist)
2015 – Hawai'i (play-in)
2013 – UC Irvine (national champion)
2012 – UC Irvine (national champion)
2011 – UC Santa Barbara (national runner-up)
2010 – CSUN (national semifinalist)
2009 – UC Irvine (national champion)
2008 – Long Beach State (national semifinalist)
2007 – UC Irvine (national champion)
2006 – UC Irvine (national semifinalist)
2004 – Long Beach State (national runner-up)
2002 – Hawai'i (national champion)*
1999 – Long Beach State (national runner-up)
1996 – Hawai'i (national runner-up)
1995 – Hawai'i (national semifinalist)
1993 – CSUN (national runner-up)
1991 – Long Beach State (national champion)
1990 – Long Beach State (national runner-up)
1988 – UC Santa Barbara (national runner-up)
1975 – UC Santa Barbara (national runner-up)
1974 – UC Santa Barbara (national runner-up)
1973 – Long Beach State (national runner-up)
1972 – UC Santa Barbara (national semifinalist)
1971 – UC Santa Barbara (national runner-up)
1970 – Long Beach State (national runner-up)
1970 – UC Santa Barbara (national semifinalist)

* Later vacated due to use of ineligible player

NATIONAL POLLS, NO. 1 TEAMS

2016 – Long Beach State
2015 – UC Irvine, Hawai'i
2014 – UC Irvine, Long Beach State
2013 – UC Irvine
2012 – UC Irvine
2011 – None
2010 – CSUN
2009 – UC Irvine, CSUN
2008 – CSUN
2007 – UC Irvine
2006 – UC Irvine, Long Beach State
2005 – None
2004 – Hawai'i
2003 – Hawai'i, UC Irvine
2002 – Hawai'i
2001 – Hawai'i, Long Beach State
2000 – Long Beach State
1999 – Long Beach State