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BYU TOPS 2006 MPSF PRESEASON VOLLEYBALL COACHES' POLL

BRIGHAM YOUNG topped the first-ever MPSF Preseason Men's Volleyball Coaches' Poll based on a veteran roster, including five returning starters. UCLA was voted to finish behind the Cougars on the strength of their depth and experience as a NCAA finalist. LONG BEACH STATE was selected third after ending their last campaign in the MPSF Championship match loss to No. 4 PEPPERDINE, who finished 2005 as both MPSF and NCAA Champions. No. 5 HAWAII also brings depth to their ambition to get back to the NCAA Tournament this spring after finishing in the top-four last season. CAL STATE NORTHRIDGE and UC SANTA BARBARA square off tied for a sixth-place finish, about where they ended last season despite the Gauchos run into the MPSF semifinals. UC IRVINE, PACIFIC and USC all look to move up a notch from their 2005 finishes with predictions for the No. 8, No. 9 and No. 10 slots, respectively. STANFORD has been slated for a No. 11 finish followed by No. 12 UC SAN DIEGO.

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Rank	Team	2005 team record:	2005 MPSF finish:
No. 1	Brigham Young	28 points (6 first-place votes)	20-10 (15-7 MPSF) #3
No. 2	UCLA	37 points (3 first-place votes)	26-6 (18-4 MPSF) #2
No. 3	Long Beach State	40 points (1 first-place vote)	22-10 (14-8 MPSF) #5
No. 4	Pepperdine	47 points (1 first-place vote)	25-2 (20-2 MPSF) #1 MPSF Champ
No. 5	Hawaii	49 points	19-9 (15-7 MPSF) #4
No. 6T	Cal State Northridge	78 points (1 first-place vote)	19-13 (10-12 MPSF) #7
No. 6T	UC Santa Barbara	78 points	16-14 (13-9 MPSF) #6
No. 8	UC Irvine	80 points	9-20 (7-15 MPSF) #9
No. 9	Pacific	113 points	12-18 (14-8 MPSF) #10
No. 10	USC	119 points	6-23 (3-19 MPSF) #11
No. 11	Stanford	123 points	11-15 (10-12 MPSF) #8
No. 12	UC San Diego	144 points	2-24 (1-21 MPSF) #12

No. 1: BRIGHAM YOUNG 20-10 (15-7 MPSF 2005) – The Cougars should challenge for the league title, as they return five starters and one other player that started 13 matches, including All-Americans **Ivan Perez** and **Victor Batista**, who were first and second on the team in kills per game in 2005. BYU also returns All-MPSF setter **Rob Neilson** and libero **Brian Rowley**, who led the team in digs.

No. 2: UCLA 26-6 (18-4 MPSF 2005) – In 2006, the Bruins return nine lettermen and two starters from a 26-6 team that advanced to the NCAA finals. Senior setter **Dennis Gonzalez** and sophomore Libero **Tony Ker** are the mainstays, and will be surrounded by seniors **Damien Scott** (OH), **Nick Scheftic** (Q) and **David Russell** (Q), each a three-year letterman. Junior outside hitter **Paul George** and freshman opposite **Sean O'Malley** were impressive in the Fall and should fill out the starting lineup. Redshirt freshmen **Jamie Diefenbach** (Q), **Nathan Bosza** (Op/OH) and true freshmen **Brett Perrine** (OH) and **Matt Wade** (S) will see plenty of playing time.

No. 3: LONG BEACH STATE 22-10 (14-8 MPSF 2005) – The 49ers were the hottest team in the MPSF at the end of the season in 2005. Long Beach advanced all the way to the MPSF Tournament final, falling to eventual national champion Pepperdine. Head Coach **Alan Knipe** returns four starters, including first team All-Americans **Tyler Hildebrand** (S) and **Robert Tarr** (OH). Also returning are middle blockers **Duncan Budinger** and **Teddy Liles**, giving the 49ers a very strong offensive attack for 2006.

No. 4: PEPPERDINE 25-2 (20-2 MPSF 2005) – The defending MPSF and NCAA Champion PEPPERDINE Waves have the daunting task of replacing the 2005 National and MPSF Player of the Year in **Sean Rooney**. But 2006 should be more of a reloading season as opposed to a rebuilding season with first team All-American middle blocker **Andy Hein** back for his senior season and the return of national and conference Freshman of the Year in setter **Jonathan Winder**. The Waves return four of six starters from last year's team, including **Tom Hulse** and **John Parfitt**. Key additions to this year's team include **Paul Carroll**, **Todd Dildine**, **Matt McKee** and **J.D. Schleppbach**.

No. 5: HAWAII 19-9 (15-7 MPSF 2005) – HAWAII won 70% of their games last year and head coach Mike Wilton believes that the team is vastly improved, particularly with serving, passing, and team defense. Of course this statement is relative to the fact that UH can expect nothing but the best collegiate schedule possible. Coach Wilton is expecting to be equal to the challenge, and that UH should have another solid season. The Warriors return All-American libero **Alfred Reft**. Setter **Brian Beckwith** returns more determined than a year ago and should have the UH offense spread across the court. The middle blockers - **Maulia La Barre** and **Dio Dante** - have had a great fall, as well as **Kyle Klinger**. The outside hitters consists of a pair of seniors in **Jose Delgado** and **Matt Bender**. Both seem to be in top shape and out to improve on last year's numbers.

No. 6T: CAL STATE NORTHRIDGE 19-13 (10-12 MPSF 2005) – CAL STATE NORTHRIDGE returns five starters (including libero) and nine letterwinners from last season's 19-14 squad. Second Team All-American **Brian Waite** and **James Lischer** are back at the middle blocker spots and fellow senior **Cary Hanson** and sophomore **Isaac Kneubuhl** are back at the outside hitter spots. Waite finished second on the team averaging 2.85 kpg and Lischer was third at 2.70 kpg. Waite returns as the team's top blocker at 1.23 per game. Despite losing All-MPSF performer **Nils Nielsen** and setter **Jeff Conover**, sophomore **Travis Bluemling** appears set to take over the Northridge setting duties.

No. 6T: UC SANTA BARBARA 16-14 (13-9 MPSF 2005) – UC SANTA BARBARA returns a core group of players that includes a pair of All-Americans and the squad's setter from each of the past three seasons. Junior **Evan Patak**, one of the nation's premier attacking players will be back for his third season, and sophomore middle blocker **Theo Brunner** will stand tall in the middle after a stellar freshman campaign. However, 2006 will be a transition for the Gauchos as four-year starting libero **Aaron Mansfield** has moved to the Santa Barbara bench, and All-MPSF middle blocker **Michael Kennedy** graduated following last season's run in the MPSF tournament. UCSB does welcome in an athletic eight-member recruiting class, as well as the return of **David Kennedy**, younger brother of Michael, from the Gaucho Basketball team. Head coach **Ken Preston** describes this year's squad as one of his most skilled clubs athletically that he has had in Santa Barbara in recent years.

No. 8: UC IRVINE 9-20 (7-15 MPSF 2005) – UC IRVINE returns all but letterwinner **Dillon Fitch** to the 2006 squad. The team is led by second team All-MPSF selection **Jayson Jablonsky**, who was ranked eighth in kills per game (4.09) and in points (4.70) among MPSF players last season. Redshirt freshman **Taylor Wilson** joins Jablonsky outside. UCI also returns junior setter **Brian Thornton**, junior opposite b and junior **David Smith** and sophomore **Aaron Harrell** in the middle.

No. 9: PACIFIC 12-18 (14-8 MPSF 2005) – 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. 10: USC 6-23 (3-19 MPSF 2005) – The 2006 Trojans return 4 starters, including rising young stars **Jimmy Killian** at setter and **Andrew Vernon** at middle blocker, plus veteran **Joao Grangeiro** (one of the game's best liberos) and explosive outside hitter **Juan Figueroa**. USC also features one of the nation's top recruiting classes, led by 6-7 outside hitter **C.J. Schellenberg**, who was the national high school player of the year in 2005.

No. 11: STANFORD 11-15 (10-12 MPSF 2005) – Eleven returning players and six freshmen will lead the STANFORD men's volleyball team into action in 2006. After graduating three outstanding seniors in 2005, the Cardinal will look to all four classes to make an impact this season. The senior class is led by middle blocker **Chris Ahfeldt** and opposite **Ben Reddy**. Both Ahfeldt and Reddy were strong for the team last season: Ahfeldt with his consistency in the middle and Reddy with his offensive power. Reddy led the 2005 squad in kills (330) and service aces (26), and will be looked to again to produce points.

No. 12: UC SAN DIEGO 2-24 (1-21 MPSF 2005) – UCSD returns starting setter **Brooks Dierdorff** to direct the offense. The Tritons lost a big part of last year's team to graduation in **Adam Toren**, **Luke Honnette**, **Adam Rusch** and **Dickens Tai**. Some players looking to replace the graduated seniors will be **Mike Reuter**, **Garret Smith** and **John Mark Wendler**. UCSD returns a total of nine letterwinners from the 2005 team.

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