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## Northwest Nazarene Selected To Repeat GNAC Title Run

PORTLAND, Ore. – After finishing in a tie for first place in the regular season and winning the GNAC

Championships in 2016, Northwest Nazarene is the pick of the GNAC coaches to win the conference title in 2017.

Four teams finished the regular season within one game of each other in the conference standings in 2016, and this year is expected to be just as competitive. Three teams split the first place votes with Northwest Nazarene taking

four and Western Oregon and Central Washington each taking one. Defending co-conference champion Montana State Billings comes in fourth, but is only 12 points behind Northwest Nazarene in the voting.

For the first time in conference history, the GNAC Championships will be expanded to four teams after being a three-team tournament since it was introduced in 2013. The GNAC Championships will be hosted by the GNAC’s newest member, Concordia, on May 10-12. It will be the first GNAC championship hosted by Concordia in any sport.

Northwest Nazarene returns four starting position players from last year’s team, which ended the year winning six of seven games to lift the conference trophy at the GNAC Championships. The Crusaders got a four-game sweep against Concordia on the last week of the season to secure their spot in the conference tournament. After dropping the first game, NNU came back to win the next two games by one-run margins.

Left-handed pitcher **Jaramy Jacobs** threw 8.1 innings in those last two wins, including recording the last seven outs of the championship game. He is one of four starting pitchers to return to the Crusaders’ roster this year. He is joined by all-GNAC honorable mention **Ross Clevenger**, who threw 67.2 innings and had a 5-2 record last year.

The Crusaders also return NCBWA First Team All-West Region third-baseman **Andrew Helmstadter** who had a .331 batting average with four home runs and 27 RBIs last year. He is joined by first baseman **Brady Baker**, who started 43 games last year and drove in 23 runs.

Western Oregon finished right behind NNU in the voting with 30 points after a runner-up finish at the GNAC Championships last year. The Wolves return GNAC Pitcher of the Year **Brady Miller**, who threw 80.1 innings last year and had a 10-2 record with a 3.14 ERA. His 10 wins led the GNAC and ranked 14th in NCAA Division II.

The Wolves offense produced a GNAC-best 361 runs last year, but WOU lost five starting position players, including all of their top three players in batting average. Western Oregon does, however, return all-GNAC honorable mention second baseman and leadoff hitter **Jay**

### 2017 GNAC Preseason Baseball Coaches Poll

Team (1st Place Votes)	2016 Record (Finish)	Pts.
1. Northwest Nazarene (4)	30-21 (23-15, Tie 1st)	33
2. Western Oregon (1)	30-20 (24-16, 3rd)	30
3. Central Washington (1)	31-23 (23-17, 4th)	22
4. Montana State Billings	27-23 (23-15, Tie 1st)	21
5. Concordia	15-35 (13-27, 5th)	10
Saint Martin's	15-35 (12-28, 6th)	10

Votes awarded on a 6-5-4-3-2-1 basis.

**Leverett**, who had a .426 on base percentage. The Wolves also added University of Washington transfer **Nyles Nygaard** to the infield. As a Husky, Nygaard played in 37 games, starting two, and drove in four runs.

Central Washington is picked third by the GNAC coaches and received one first-place vote to finish one point ahead of Montana State Billings. The Wildcats took fourth place last year, missing out on the GNAC Championships despite being just one game out of first place. They return a total of four starters from last year's squad.

Topping that list of returning starters is their ace **McKenzie Gaul**, who had a GNAC-best 2.13 ERA in 55 innings pitched. The left-hander struck out 6.9 batters per nine innings and earned four wins in his junior season. Offensively, CWU brings back all-GNAC honorable mention third baseman **Dylan Freyer**, who had a .300 batting average last year. He is joined by utility player **Kyle Stahl**, who had a .379 batting average with two home runs and 16 RBIs.

Montana State Billings came in fourth in the preseason poll after being co-regular season conference champions in 2016. The Yellowjackets finished the regular season on an incredible run of 11 wins in 12 games to qualify for the GNAC Championships on the last day of the season. **Adam Cox** was a crucial piece to that run, collecting three wins on the mound while also helping the team with his bat. He is one of four starters to return to the Yellowjackets' roster.

Cox finished the season with a .371 batting average and a 6-1 record on the mound to earn Second Team All-GNAC recognition. Alongside him is leadoff hitter **Casey Merritt**, who missed most of the 2016 season after being a second team all-conference selection in 2015. Outfielder **Zach Robinson** will add depth to the MSUB batting lineup after recording a .272 batting average last year with six extra-base hits.

The Yellowjackets also bring back their ace, **Cody Cooper**, who was a NCBWA Second Team All-West Region selection after registering a 7-2 record in 13 starts with a 2.81 ERA. Cooper had a GNAC-best 106 strikeouts last year and led the GNAC in innings pitched as well with 99.1. **Matt Hape** also returns to the MSUB pitching rotation after starting 12 games last year with a 6-4 record.

Concordia and Saint Martin's are tied for fifth place in the preseason poll with each receiving 10 points. Concordia finished the 2016 season one game ahead of Saint Martin's with a 13-27 GNAC record but both teams finished with an identical record of 15-35 overall.

Concordia, the GNAC Championships host, will look to qualify for the tournament in its second year in the league. The Cavaliers return starting pitcher **Jake Brewer** and relief pitcher **Ryan Caylor**. Concordia also returns its leadoff hitter **Cole Crosby**. The outfielder had a team-best .305 batting average in 2016 and was a Second Team All-GNAC selection. Concordia returns a conference-high seven starting position players to the roster in 2017.

Saint Martin's brings back two pitchers from its four-man rotation with **Mickey Walker** and **Aaron Shoup** back on the Saints' roster. The two combined to throw 135 innings last year and had seven wins combined. All-GNAC honorable mention **Adam Eskil** is also back on the team after posting a .278 batting average in 2016, which was the second best on the team. He also had a team-high 14 extra-base hits and even pitched 12.1 inniings with eight strikeouts.

The 2017 baseball season will start on the first weekend of February with Montana State Billings playing a series at Lewis-Clark State, while Concordia travels to UC San Diego on February 3. Central Washington and Western Oregon will start their seasons the following day with the Wolves hosting Corban in a double-header. Preseason favorite Northwest Nazarene will start its season on February 9 at Cal State L.A. and Saint Martin's gets its season under way on February 17 with a four-game tournament at Dixie State.

**GNAC Baseball Team Capsules Follow On Next Page**



## GNAC Baseball Teams At A Glance

### CENTRAL WASHINGTON

**Head Coach:** Desi Storey

**Assistant Coaches:** Ken Wilson, Kellen Camus, Scott Stone, Benjamin Dunbar

**2016 Overall Record:** 27-23 **GNAC Record (Finish):** 23-17 (4th)

**Total Returners:** 11      **Total Returning Position Starters:** 3      **Total Returning Starting Pitchers:** 1

**Key Returners:** Dylan Freyer (INF, R/R, 5-10, Sr., Saugus, Calif. – College of the Canyons, Honorable Mention All-GNAC, .300 Avg., 2 HR, 29 RBI), Kyle Stahl (UTIL, R/R, 5-9, Sr., Huntington Beach, Calif. – Golden West College, Honorable Mention All-GNAC, D2CCA Second Team All-West Region, .379 Avg., 2 HR, 16 RBI, .534 Slg%), Mackenzie Gaul (LHP, L/L, 6-0, Sr., Winlock, Wash. – Washington, Honorable Mention All-GNAC, 4-3, 2.13 ERA, 55 IP, 42 K)

**Key Losses:** Ryan Atkinson (2B), Jonathan Dailey (SS), CJ Gettman (RHP)

**Top Freshmen:** JJ Asinas (P/INF, R/R, 5-10, Federal Way, Wash. – Todd Beamer), Justin Hampson (OF, R/R, 6-0, Mill Creek, Wash. – Jackson), Griffin Davis (RHP, R/R, 6-3, Spokane, Wash. – Farris HS)

**Top Transfers:** Robert Ball (C, R/R, 5-10, So., Issaquah, Wash. – Yakima Valley CC)

### CONCORDIA

**Head Coach:** Rob Vance (Pacific, 1987, 378-514, 19th season)

**Assistant Coaches:** Jeff Bard, Mark Hills, Bo Cornish, Garrett DeGallier, James Threw

**2016 Overall Record:** 15-35 **GNAC Record (Finish):** 13-27 (5th)

**Total Returners:** 19      **Total Returning Position Starters:** 7      **Total Returning Starting Pitchers:** 2

**Key Returners:** Jake Brewer (RHP, R/R, 6-6, Sr., Sammamish, Wash., 1-6, 8.73 ERA, 33 K), Ryan Caylor (RHP, R/R, 6-2, Sr., Kenmore, Wash., 4.91 ERA, 13 K), Cole Crosby (OF, L/R, 5-9, Jr., Las Vegas, Nev., Second Team All-GNAC, .305 Avg., 8 2B), Kyle Henderson (C, L/R, 6-2, Sr., Portland, Ore., .298 Avg., 9 3B), Mike Martinez (LHP, L/L, 6-2, Jr., San Diego, Calif., 4-4, 6.50 ERA, 35 K), Adam Taylor (INF, R/R, 5-10, Sr., San Diego, Calif., .248 Avg., 6 2B), Tanner Williams (UTIL, R/R, 5-11, Jr., Ramona, Calif., .247 Avg., 7 2B), Kyle Wilson (RHP, R/R, 5-10, Jr., Ramona, Calif., 5.13 ERA, 15 K)

**Key Losses:** Austin Hadley (RHP), Harrison McGee (RHP), Reddick Konner (1B), Elliot North (C)

**Top Freshmen:** Andrew Marriott (LHP, L/L, 5-9, Portland, Ore. – Grant HS), Tucker Parker (RHP/1B, R/R, 6-0, Camas, Wash. – Camas HS)

**Top Transfers:** David Baglai (RHP, R/R, 6-3, Forest Grove, Ore. – Pacific Univ.), Andrew Barrera (UTIL, R/R, 5-9, Kent, Wash., Pierce College), Mitch Bevacqua (OF, R/R, 6-0, Cour d'Alene, Idaho – Washington)

### MONTANA STATE BILLINGS

**Head Coach:** Aaron Sutton (Western Oregon 2008, 1st Season, 6th Season Overall, 139-61)

**Assistant Coaches:** Parker Kruckenberg, Ryan Wright

**2016 Overall Record:** 30-20 **GNAC Record (Finish):** 23-15 (Tie 1st, 1-2 in GNAC Championships)

**Total Returners:** 11      **Total Returning Position Starters:** 4      **Total Returning Starting Pitchers:** 2

**Key Returners:** Adam Cox (1B/RHP, R/R, 6-3, Jr., Encino, Calif. – Taft, NCBWA Second Team All-West Region, Second Team All-GNAC, .371 Avg., 9 HR, 47 RBI), Casey Merritt (INF, L/L, 5-9, Sr., Twin Falls, Idaho – Twin Falls, Second Team All-GNAC in 2015, .271 Avg., 1 HR, 11 RBI), Zach Robinson (OF, R/R, 5-10, Sr., Cedar Hills, Utah – Miles CC, .272 Avg., 12 RBI), Landon Peterson (C, L/R, 5-9, Jr., Boise, Idaho – Capital, .195 Avg., 12 RBI), Cody Cooper (RHP, R/R, 6-4, Sr., Bozeman, Mont. – Bozeman, NCBWA Second Team All-West Region, First Team All-GNAC, 99.1 IP, 2.81 ERA, 106 K), Matt Hape (RHP, R/R, 6-4, Sr., Bozeman, Mont. – Bozeman, 49.2 IP, 6.89 ERA, 37 K)

**Key Losses:** Kyle Durbin (INF), Luke Reinschmidt (OF), Tanner Johnson (RHP)

**Top Freshmen:** Andrew Schleusner (C/INF, R/R, 5-11, Kalispell, Mont. – Glacier), Jake Tallman (INF, R/R, 5-10, Billings, Mont. – Billings West)

**Top Transfers:** Conner Linebarger (INF, L/R, 6-2, Jr., Bozeman, Mont. – Hawaii), Michael Gahan (INF/RHP, R/R, 6-1, Jr., Lismore, Australia – Miles CC), Jalen Garcia (OF/RHP, R/R, 6-0, So., Billings, Mont. – Corban Univ.)

## **NORTHEAST NAZARENE**

**Head Coach:** Rocke Musgraves (Westmont 1988, 77-80, 4th Season, 18th Season Overall, 661-356)

**Assistant Coaches:** Jason Krohn, Easton Napiontek, Nick Horton, Jeremy Richardson, Sam Cook

**2016 Overall Record:** 30-21 **GNAC Record (Finish):** 23-15 (Tie 1st, Won GNAC Championships)

**Total Returners:** 18      **Total Returning Position Starters:** 4      **Total Returning Starting Pitchers:** 4

**Key Returners:** Andrew Helmstadter (C/3B, R/R, 6-0, Sr., Palm Desert, Calif. – Desert Christian Academy, NCBWA First Team All-West Region, First Team All-GNAC .331 Avg., 34 R, 27 RBI, 4 HR, 651 Games, 48 Starts); Ross Clevenger (RHP, R/R, 6-0, Jr., Eagle, Idaho – Bishop Kelly, Honorable Mention All-GNAC, 5-2, 4.92 ERA, 67.2 IP, 13 Games, 12 Starts, 47 K), Jaramy Jacobs (LHP, L/L, 6-3, Sr., Fremont, Calif. – Ohlone College, 5-6, 5.34 ERA, 91.0 IP, 15 Games, 14 Starts, 76 K), Brady Baker (RHP/IF, R/R, 6-3, Sr., Ontario, Ore. – Treasure Valley, .244 Avg., 14 R, 23 RBIs, 2 HR, 46 Games, 43 Starts); Jesse Hilyard (C/OF, R/R, 6-4, Jr., Klamath Falls, Ore. – Henley, .187 Avg., 14 R, 14 RBI, 3 HR, 5 SB, 45 Games, 37 Starts); Spencer Pollock (C, R/R, 5-11, Sr., Payette, Idaho – Treasure Valley CC, .360 Avg., 19 R, 22 RBI, 1 HR, 42 Games, 34 Starts); Brett Nielsen (LHP/IF, L/L, 6-4, Sr., Eugene, Ore. – Tacoma CC, .295 Avg., 14 R, 14 RBIs, 3 HR, 31 Games, 22 Starts); Tim Jones (OF, L/L, 6-1, Jr., Meridian, Idaho – Meridian HS, .328 Avg., 15 R, 10 RBIs, 4 HR, 27 Games, 15 Starts); Colton McCluskey (INF, R/R, 5-11, Jr., Enumclaw, Wash. – College of the Desert, .196 Avg., 9 R, 8 RBI, 1 HR, 23 Games, 18 Starts)

**Key Losses:** Tyler Davis (2B); Tucker Campbell (SS), Ryan Johnson (OF), Colton Loomis (RHP), Ryan Nyborg (RHP), Blake Mitchell (RHP)

**Top Freshmen:** Devon Canup (LHP, L/L, 5-11, Fruita, Colo. – Fruita Monument HS); Koby Griffin (SS/RHP, R/R, 6-2, Helena, Mont. – Capital HS); Ben Johnson (C, 5-11, Tacoma, Wash. – Bellarmine Prep); Ben Hunter (OF/RHP, 6-3, Milford, Ohio – Milford Senior HS); Channon MacBean (OF, 6-0, Silverton, Ore. – Silverton HS); Brennan Patterson (RHP, 6-4, Roy, Utah – Roy HS); Braden Hirsch (INF, 5-8, Bountiful, Utah – Viewmont HS)

**Top Transfers:** Casey Cornwell (SS, R/R, 5-9, So., Portland, Ore. – Western Nevada College); Jarod Gonzales (1B/3B, R/R, 5-9, Sr., Kennewick, Wash. – Gonzaga); Billy King (1B/OF, L/L, 6-2, Sr., Anacortes, Wash. – Oregon State); Casey Sheehan (OF, R/R, 6-1, Jr., Redlands, Calif. – Riverside CC)

## **SAINT MARTIN'S**

**Head Coach:** Ken Garland (Willamette College 1996, 114-165, 9th Season)

**Assistant Coaches:** Kelly Gau, Cameron Selik, Paul Sopak, Chase DeCoito

**2016 Overall Record:** 15-35 **GNAC Record (Finish):** 12-28 (6th)

**Total Returners:** 16      **Total Returning Position Starters:** 6      **Total Returning Starting Pitchers:** 2

**Key Returners:** Zach Raczok (C, R/R, 5-10, Sr., Claremont, Calif., 33 H, 46 TB), Adam Eskil (RHP/1B, R/R, 5-11, Jr., Walla Walla, Wash., Honorable Mention All-GNAC, .278 Avg., 42 H, 25 RBI, .404 Slg%), Alec Hagerman (OF, R/R, 5-11, Sr., Peoria, Ariz., Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Austin Feist (OF, R/R, 6-2, So., Burns, Ore., Honorable Mention All-GNAC, .276 Avg., 1 HR, 23 RBI), Mickey Walker (P, R/R, 6-2, So., Keizer, Ore., GNAC Freshmen of the Year, All-GNAC Honorable Mention, 3-6, 4.56 ERA, 3 Saves, 59 K, 75.0 IP), Trevor Young (LHP/OF/1B, L/L, 6-2, Sr., Monroe, Ore., .286 Avg., 24 H, 7 RBI), Aaron Shoup (LHP, L/L, 5-11, Woodland, Wash., 4-4, 5.55 ERA, 1 CG), Brandon Witherspoon (1B/OF, R/L, 6-0, Sr., Seattle, Wash. – Spokane Falls CC, .297 Avg., 47 H, 3 HR, 17 RBI, 62 TB)

**Key Losses:** Blake Lord (SS), Torin Dooley (RHP), Josh Sontag (RHP/1B), Jake Huskey (INF)

**Top Freshmen:** Isaac Hegamin (INF, R/R, 5-8, Covington, Wash. – Kentwood HS), Micah McNicoll (INF, S/R, 5-7, Kaneohe, Hawaii – Kamehameha HS), Ben Wadowski (LHP/1B, L/L, 6-0, Kent, Wash. – Kentwood HS)

**Top Transfers:** Steven Sordahl (OF, R/R, 6-0, Kennewick, Wash. – Walla Walla CC)

## **WESTERN OREGON**

**Head Coach:** Kellen Walker (Point Loma 2006, 93-65, 4th Season)

**Assistant Coaches:** Miles Kizer, Mike McInerney, Jake Whisler

**2016 Overall Record:** 31-23 **GNAC Record (Finish):** 24-16 (3rd, GNAC Championships runner-up)

**Total Returners:** 17      **Total Returning Position Starters:** 4      **Total Returning Starting Pitchers:** 1

**Key Returners:** Brady Miller (P, R/R, 6-2, Gilbert, Ariz. – Campo Verde, NCBWA Second Team All-West Region, GNAC Pitcher of the Year, First Team All GNAC, D2CCA Second Team All-West Region 10-2, 3.14 ERA, 80.1 IP, 68 H, 89 K, 222 BA), Jacob Fricke (P, L/L, 6-4, Glide, Ore. – Glide, 3-3, 2.25 ERA, 32.0 IP, 9 R, 24 K), Jay Leverett (INF, R/R, 5-9, 175, Gold Bar, Wash. – Sultan/Skagit Valley, Honorable Mention All-GNAC, .303 Avg., 3 HR, 18 RBI, 4-5 SB)

**Key Losses:** Trevor Podratz (DH/C), Kyle Vanderkin (3B), Nathan Etheridge (1B), Cody Sullivan (OF), Darrien Moran (P), Garrett Alvarez (P), Gary Steindorf (P)

**Top Freshmen:** Conner McCord (P/1B, L/L, Tempe, Ariz. – Corona Del Sol), Alex Roth (P, R/R, Glendale, Ariz. – Mountain Ridge)

**Top Transfers:** Garrett Anderson (INF, R/R, 5-8, Jr, Puyallup, Wash. – Tacoma CC), Craig Grubbe (P, R/R, 6-1, Jr., San Diego, Calif. – Grossmont JC), Nyles Nygaard (INF, R/R, 6-0, Jr., Torrance, Calif. – Washington)