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Simon Fraser Picked By Coaches As Slight Favorites Over Seattle Pacific

PORTLAND, Ore. – In the past six years, Simon Fraser and Seattle Pacific have accounted for all of the Great Northwest Athletic Conference regular season titles. In the 2016 GNAC Preseason Men’s Soccer Coaches Poll, Simon Fraser is picked as the favorite to once again win the conference.

Simon Fraser was a nearly unbeatable force when it joined the GNAC, going 41-4-0 and winning the conference title in each of its first four years. Seattle Pacific, which grabbed two first-place votes and finished only three points behind in the voting, ended SFU’s run of dominance by winning the GNAC each of the last two years.

Both Simon Fraser and Seattle Pacific are led by two of the toughest and most experienced goalkeepers in GNAC history, who are both going into their senior seasons. Clan goalkeeper **Brandon Watson** has produced a career record 19 shutouts in GNAC matches. Meanwhile Falcons goalkeeper **Cody Lang** has produced 18 career shutouts in conference play and holds the conference record for goals against average at 0.58.

Among a total of eight returning starters, SFU brings back a trio of sophomore midfielders. Brothers **Adam** and **Kyle Jones** both earned unanimous First Team All-GNAC honors last season and Adam Jones was named GNAC Freshman of the Year. They are joined by First Team All-GNAC selection **Mamadi Camara**, who scored five goals in his freshman season.

In 2015, the SFU defensive line that allowed the least shots on goal in the conference (60). The Clan brings back from that defense GNAC Co-Newcomer of the Year **Pascal Schmidt** and All-GNAC Honorable Mention **Robert Hyams**.

Seattle Pacific went 10-1-3 in conference play last season en route to the third GNAC crown in program history. Along with Lang, who was GNAC Defensive Player of the Year, the Falcons return 16 letterwinners, including six starters. Among those returning starters is junior forward **Gabe Kellum**, who tallied four goals and five assists despite only starting in 10 matches last season. The Falcons also return senior defenders **Davis Karaica** and **Chaz Jenkins**, who were both First Team All-GNAC choices in 2015.

Montana State Billings had the most productive offense in 2015, scoring nearly two goals per game. First Team All-GNAC forward **Ricardo Palomino**, who returns for his junior season, paced the team with a 16 goals, which was the most in the West Region. The Yellowjackets, who finished third in the preseason voting, also bring back seniors **Thiago Novis** and **Julian Toenges**, who had four and three goals respectively, while Toenges recorded a team-best 10 assists.

On the defensive side, the Yellowjackets bring back All-GNAC Honorable mention goalkeeper **Tom Lohmann**, who recorded four shutouts last season and made 55 saves.

Northwest Nazarene led the GNAC with 108 points en route to a third place finish. However, the Crusaders lost more than half of its starting lineup from last year to graduation, including GNAC Player of the Year Julio Castillo. The Crusaders are led by new head coach **Joel DeLass**, who takes over the program from Coe Michaelson, who took the head coaching job at California Baptist. DeLass spent four years as the top assistant coach at his alma mater Wheaton (Ill).

Team (1st Place Votes)	2015 Record (Finish)	Pts.
1. Simon Fraser (5)	10-3-4 (9-2-3, 2nd)	47
2. Seattle Pacific (2)	14-1-4 (10-1-3, 1st)	44
3. MSU Billings	8-6-4 (6-5-3, 4th)	31
4. Northwest Nazarene	12-6-1 (8-5-1, 3rd)	27
5. Concordia	7-5-5 (5-4-5, 5th)	20
6. Western Washington	5-10-3 (3-9-2, 7th)	18
7. Saint Martin’s	6-12-1 (4-10, 6th)	9

Votes awarded on 7-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis.

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Northwest Nazarene brings in five freshmen and five transfers to replace its large graduating class, including Arizona Western transfer **Cedric Keon Jones**, who scored 17 goals in 40 matches at the junior college. The Crusaders also return **Alex Mitrovic** and **Fernando Alvarez**, who each scored five goals last season.

In its first season in the GNAC, Concordia had scattered success. The Cavaliers swept Saint Martin's and Mary and earned ties against Seattle Pacific in both meetings. The Cavaliers finished with a record of 5-4-5 in the GNAC for fifth place, which is where they are picked in the preseason poll.

Concordia lost six starters from last year's roster, but senior forward and First Team All-GNAC selection **Matt Paine** is back after recording 11 goals and seven assists. He ranked second in the GNAC in points with 29 last season. The Cavaliers also return its next two leading goal-scorers in **Jordan Potts**, who scored three goals on just 16 shots, and **Erick Urzua**, who had three goals and three assists.

Western Washington finished last year under the .500 mark for the first time since the 2011 season. The Vikings had 21 different players start in a match last year and only three players started all 18 matches. Junior midfielder **Luke Olney**, who was an All-GNAC Honorable mention is the only of those three players to return to the Vikings roster.

Also returning for WWU are senior forwards **Connor Pichette** and **Eleazar Galvan**, who each scored two goals last year. Pichette scored an unassisted goal in the 77th minute against then No. 12-ranked Northwest Nazarene in an eventual 2-1 victory against the Crusaders. On the defensive side, senior **Tyler Visten** will also be back between the goalposts for the Vikings in 2016 after recording 70 saves last year, while producing a total three shutouts, including consecutive shutouts against California Collegiate Athletic Association opponents UC San Diego and Cal State East Bay.

Saint Martin's will be looking to continue its success from late last season, where the Saints won three of their last four games to wrap up the regular season in sixth place in the GNAC. The Saints bring back their leading goal-scorer **Kyle Witzel** among a group of eight returning starters. The junior midfielder scored eight goals last season, including two game-winners.

Saint Martin's will be without starting goalkeeper Nick Rosato, but both **Ian Fry** and **Griffin Small** saw playing time last season in the net. Meanwhile, the team brings back three starting defenders.

All seven teams will open the 2016 season on Thurs., Sept. 1, headlined by Seattle Pacific at Sonoma State and Simon Fraser at Cal State San Bernardino. Conference play begins on Thurs., Sept. 22, with six of the conference's seven teams in action. The schedule includes the first of two meetings between Simon Fraser and Seattle Pacific.

GNAC Men's Soccer Teams At A Glance

CONCORDIA

Head Coach: Dan Birkey (Warner Pacific, 1979, 370-177-28, 29th season)

Assistant Coaches: Andy Duvall, Nathan Walzer

2015 Overall Record: 7-5-5 **Conference Record (Finish):** 5-4-5 (5th)

Letterwinners Returning: 12

Starters Returning/Lost: 5/6

Returning Starters: Matt Paine (F, Sr., 11 Goals, 7 Assists, 1st Team All-GNAC), Brady Sanders (D, Jr., 15 Starts, 2 Goals), Jordan Potts (M, Sr., 13 Starts, 3 Goals), Erich Urzua (M, So., 15 Starts, 3 Goals, 3 Assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Billy Fleury (D, Sr.)

Key Losses: Ross Gray (M), Cody Guthrie (D), Zak Naylor (F), Ben Culpán (F)

Key Freshmen: Noah Swigart (F, Portland, Ore. - Sunset), Christian Thyron (M, Vancouver, Wash. - Prairie), Jose Bautista (D, McMinnville, Ore. - McMinnville), Mahtab Brar (Roseburg, Ore. - Roseburg)

Key Transfers: Alec Lohr (D, Jr., Nogales, Ariz. - Clark CC), Jason Hines (GK, Fr., Vancouver, Wash. - Clark CC)

MONTANA STATE BILLINGS

Head Coach: Alex Balog (Christian Brothers, 2007, 17-25-12, 4th season)

Assistant Coaches: Thomas Chameraud, Guido Riffeser, Kyle Emerick, Fernando Perez

2015 Overall Record: 8-6-4 **Conference Record (Finish):** 6-5-3 (4th)

Letterwinners Returning: 12

Starters Returning/Lost: 8/4

Returning Starters: Ricardo Palomino (F, Jr., 16 Goals, 1st Team All-GNAC), Julian Toenges (M, Sr., 3 Goals, 10 Assists, 2nd Team All-GNAC), Rhys Lambert (D, Jr., 2 Goals), Niklas Schregel (M, Jr., 2 Goals), Tom Lohmann (GK, Sr., Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Tom Saltwell (D, Jr.), Thiago Novis (F, Sr., 4 Goals, 2 Assists), Garret Robinson (D, Sr., 1 Assist)

Key Losses: Sam Butterworth (D), Daragh Kavanagh (M), Fernando Perez (M), Cameron Lee (D)

Key Freshmen: Oliver Posarelli (D, 5-11, Verona, Italy - Educandato Statale Agli Angeli), Ignacio Crespo (M, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala - Futeca School), Ian Bream (M, North Bend, Ore. - North Bend)

Key Transfers: Julien Dragomir (F, Sr., Scottsdale, Ariz. - UNLV), Alexis Chavez (D/M, Jr., Peoria, Ariz. - Grand Canyon Univ.), Flavio Colasanti (M, Jr., Rome, Italy - Rome Tor Vergata), Aidan Raj (D/M, Jr., Hollister, Calif. - Grand Canyon Univ.)

NORTHWEST NAZARENE

Head Coach: Joel Delass (Wheaton (Ill.), 2008, 1st season)

Assistant Coaches: Neal Didonna, Dane Manley

2015 Overall Record: 12-6-1 **Conference Record (Finish):** 8-5-1 (3rd)

Letterwinners Returning: 14

Starters Returning/Lost: 5/6

Returning Starters: Alex Mitrovic (M, So., 5 Goals, 1 Assist); Fernando Alvarez (F, Sr., 5 Goals, 4 Assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC); Ebu Camara (F, Sr., 2 Goals, 1 Assist); Dennis Vivar-Diaz (M, Sr., 1 Goal, Honorable Mention All-GNAC); Ryan Foo (GK, Sr., 7 Shutouts, 0.93 GAA)

Key Losses: Julio Castillo (M), Abraham Placito (D), Jaime Verdin (M), Erik Anderson (F), Jan Ilskens (D), Luke Broz (D)

Key Freshmen: Blake Chase (F, Billings, Mont. - Billings Senior); Rafael Junqueira (F, Sao Paulo, Brazil - Shattuck St. Mary's (Minn.)); Linus Mansson (D, Kungsbacka, Sweden - Falkenbergs FF); Carlos Rodriguez-Diaz (M, Vancouver, Wash. - Fort Vancouver); Cesar Sosa (M, Caldwell, Idaho - Skyview)

Key Transfers: Alejandro Basulto-Merito (GK, Jr., Nampa, Idaho - Northwest College (Wyo.)); Jonathan Borges Pamela (D, Jr., Caracas, Venezuela - Coffeyville CC (Kan.)); Jose Labanino-Ramos (Jr., D, Las Vegas, Nev. - Yavapai CC); Stephen Tolliver (Jr., D, Denver, Colo. - Laramie County CC); Keon Jones (Jr., M, Reno, Nev. - Arizona Western Coll.)

SAINT MARTIN'S

Head Coach: Rob Walker, Saint Martin's 1987 (29-66-5, 10th season)

Assistant Coaches: Brandon Scott, Matt Dorman

2015 Overall Record: 6-12-1 **Conference Record (Finish):** 4-10 (6th)

Letterwinners Returning: 18

Starters Returning/Lost: 8/3

Returning Starters: Tim Teipel (D, Jr., 2 Goals, 1 Assist), Jake Zimmer (F, Sr., 1 Assist), Derrick Gonzalez (M/D, Sr., 2 Goals, 1 Assist), Kyle Witzel (M, Jr., 8 Goals, 1 Assist, 2nd Team All-GNAC), McKray Kohn (F, Jr., 1 Goal), Max Harvey (M/F, Sr., 1 Goal), Kaleb Strawn (D, Sr., 1 Goal, 3 Assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC)

Key Losses: Nick Rosato (GK)

Key Freshmen: Sebastian Navarro (D, 5-10, Marysville, Wash. – Marysville Pilchuck), Will Eldred (F, 6-1, Richland, Wash. – Hanford), Dylan Shaw (GK, 5-11, Meridian, Idaho – Mountain View)

SEATTLE PACIFIC

Head Coach: Mark Collings (Seattle Pacific, 1998, 94-35-24, 9th season)

Assistant Coaches: Kevin Reiman, Erik Skipper, James Ward, Dan Pingrey

2015 Overall Record: 14-1-4 **Conference Record (Finish):** 10-1-3 (1st)

Letterwinners Returning: 16

Starters Returning/Lost: 6/5

Returning Starters: Cody Lang (GK, Sr., 0.49 GAA, GNAC Defensive Player of the Year, 1st Team All-GNAC, 3rd Team NSCAA All-American), Davis Karaica (D, Sr., NSCAA All-American Honorable Mention, 1st Team All-GNAC), Chaz Jenkins (D, Sr., 1 Goal, 1st Team All-GNAC), Jordan Kollars (M, Sr., 1 Goal, 3 Assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Gabe Kellum (F, Jr., 4 Goals, 6 Assists), Jeffrey Collings (D, Sr., 1 Assist)

Starters Lost: Danny Olivas (M), Ian Adams (M), Bryson Pavel (D), Matt Merchant (M), Garrett Jones (M)

Key Freshmen: Sam Agyei (F, Everett, Wash. – Cascade), Carlos Franco (M, Goodyear, Ariz. – Verrado),

Key Transfers: Chris Cole (D, Jr., Duvall, Wash. – Bellevue Coll.), Grayson Raffensperger (GK, Jr., Redmond, Wash., – Highline CC)

SIMON FRASER

Head Coach: Clint Schneider (Midwestern State (Texas), 2003, 10-3-4, 2nd season)

Assistant Coaches: Kevin Harmse, Tyler Baldock, Siphon Sibiya

2015 Overall Record: 10-3-4 **Conference Record (Finish):** 9-2-3 (2nd)

Letterwinners Returning: 11

Starters Returning/Lost: 8/4

Returning Starters: Ryan Dhillon (M, Sr., DNP in 2015, 2014: 4 Goals, 6 Assists), Robert Hyams (D, Sr., 1 Assist, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Brandon Watson (GK, Sr., 0.690 GAA, .786 SV%, 10 Shutouts, 2nd Team All-GNAC), Mamadi Camara (M, So., 5 Goals, 1 Assist, 1st Team All-GNAC), Adam Jones (M, Jr., 8 Goals, 6 Assists, 1st Team All-GNAC, GNAC Freshman of Year), Kyle Jones (M, So., 4 Goals, 3 Assists, 1st Team All-GNAC), Pascal Schmidt (D, Jr., GNAC Newcomer of Year), Michael North (F, So., 4 Goals, 2 Assists, 2nd Team All-GNAC)

Starters Lost: Nico Espinosa (M), Callum Whittaker (D)

Key Freshmen: Stefan Cuk (M, 6-2, Burnaby, B.C. – Burnaby Central), Sam Lee (M, 5-7, Coquitlam, B.C. – Shattuck-St. Mary's)

WESTERN WASHINGTON

Head Coach: Greg Brisbon (Seattle Pacific, 1998, 25-22-7, 4th season)

Assistant Coaches: Conner Moe

2015 Overall Record: 5-10-3 **Conference Record (Finish):** 3-9-2 (7th)

Letterwinners Returning: 13

Starters Returning/Lost: 5/6

Returning Starters: Eleazar Galvan (F, Sr., 2 Goals, 2 Assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Luke Olney (M, Jr., 1 Goal, 2 Assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Connor Pichette (F, Sr., 2 Goals, 3 Assists), Brady Ulen (D, Sr., 1 Goal), Tyler Visten (GK, Sr., 70 Saves, Honorable Mention All-GNAC)

Starters Lost: Trevor Bartels (D), Kurtis Pederson (D), Sawyer Preston (D), Jeremy Wentzel (D), Adam Talley (F)

Key Transfers: Ibra Drame (F, Jr., Seattle, Wash. – Seattle University), Colton Ronk (D/M, Jr., Renton, Wash. – Highline CC)

Key Freshmen: Christian Rotter (F, 5-9, Auburn, Wash. – Auburn Mountainview)