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Azusa Pacific Favorite To Win GNAC Football Title, 22nd in AFCA Poll

Great Northwest Coaches Poll	2013 Records	Pts
1. Azusa Pacific (6)	10-2, 9-1 (1 st)	36
2. Central Washington	7-4 (7-3, 2 nd -T)	28
3. Western Oregon (1)	7-4 (7-3, 2 nd -T)	27
4. Humboldt State	0-11 (0-10, 6 th)	19
5. Simon Fraser	3-7 (3-7, 5 th)	14
6. Dixie State	4-7 (4-6, 4 th)	12
7. South Dakota Mines	6-4 (Independent)	11

(Note: First-place votes in parentheses. Points awarded on a 6-5-4-3-2-1 basis. Each coach ranked six other opponents).

PORTLAND, Ore. - Azusa Pacific is the pre-season pick to repeat as Great Northwest Athletic Conference football champions. The Cougars are also ranked 22nd in the AFCA national poll.

APU, which opens its season Thursday, Sept. 4 at home against Grand Valley State (Mich.) in a CBS Sports Network televised game, received the maximum of six first-place votes in the GNAC Coaches pre-season poll. Coaches were not allowed to vote for their team.

Kickoff for the TV game is at 6 p.m. Pacific. Grand Valley State is ranked second in the AFCA poll in back of defending national champion Northwest Missouri.

APU won the GNAC championship last year posting a 9-1 conference record. The Cougars finished their season with a 10-2 overall record.

Among seven returning starters on offense for Azusa Pacific is running back Terrell Watson, who set a GNAC single-season record rushing for 1,812 yards and 23 touchdowns.

Central Washington, which has won seven GNAC football titles in the 11-year history of the football league, finished

second in the pre-season poll one point ahead of third-place Western Oregon, which received one first-place vote. Humboldt State, the 2011 GNAC champions, placed fourth in the poll. Simon Fraser, Dixie State and South Dakota Mines received fifth, sixth and seventh place rankings.

South Dakota Mines is a first-year member of the GNAC for football. The Hardrockers will play this season and the 2015 season in the GNAC before moving into the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference for the 2016 season.

The Grand Valley State-Azusa Pacific game is one of seven games in the opening week, including six on Saturday, Sept. 6.

Central Washington will travel to Missoula, Mont., to take on the University of Montana. Western Oregon, meanwhile, will play at Portland State.

Elsewhere, Dixie State will play at Colorado Mesa, Humboldt State visits Texas A&M - Kingsville, Menlo visits Simon Fraser and Colorado Mines will play at South Dakota Mines.

Each of the seven GNAC teams will play a single round-robin six-game conference schedule. In addition, everyone except South Dakota Mines will play three non-conference games against GNAC opponents.

The first conference counting game will be Sept. 27 when Simon Fraser and Central Washington play at Pop Keeney Stadium in Bothell, Wash., in the first "Battle for the Border" game, presented by the Washington National Guard.