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Nearly Unanimous: SPU Men’s Soccer Favorites to Win Second Straight GNAC Title

PORTLAND, Ore. – Seattle Pacific is the clear favorite to repeat as champion, receiving seven out of eight first-place votes in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference’s 2015 Preseason Men’s Soccer Coaches Poll.

With 63 points in the poll, the Falcons are not expected to falter after finishing 12-1-1 in the conference and earning the No. 1 seed in the NCAA Division II West Regional Tournament. The team reached the the region’s championship match, falling to Cal State L.A.

Seattle Pacific used a balanced offense and defense to take the conference title, scoring 30 goals while allowing just seven in 14 conference matches.

The Falcons finished the season with the third best goals against average in the nation (0.48) and the eighth best save percentage (.831). Seattle Pacific is also ranked No. 8 in the NSCAA NCAA Division II Men’s Preseason Rankings.

The Falcons bring back nine of their 11 starters from the past season, including three All-Americans. They are led defensively by senior defender **Bryson Pavel** and junior **Davis Karaica**, along with junior goalkeeper **Cody Lang**, who finished fourth in the nation in goals against average (0.47). Third Team All-American **Stephen MacDonald** headlines the offense after leading the team in goals (9) and points (26). All nine returnees were named to the all-conference team in 2014. The Falcons lose Second Team All-GNAC forward **Sean Russell**, who scored five goals in his senior year.

Simon Fraser is voted in second in the poll after finishing in third place last season. The Clan had previously won the last four conference titles, but still reached the regional tournament in 2014. Simon Fraser paced the league offensively, scoring 33 goals in conference play and 41 overall. They finished 19th in the nation in points per game (6.28) and 22nd in scoring offense (2.28 goals per game).

The Clan return nine starters from last season. Junior goalkeeper **Brandon Watson** rejoins the Clan after being named to the Second Team All-GNAC. Defender **Robert Hyams** returns after dishing out six assists to earn Honorable Mention All-GNAC honors. **Ryan Dhillon** is SFU’s leading returning scorer with four goals and six assists. The Clan do lose major contributors including unanimous GNAC Player of the Year **Jovan Blagojevic**, who led the league and ranked nationally in multiple scoring categories. He ranked fifth in goals per game (1.00), seventh in game-winning goals (7), and eighth in points per game (2.11) in the nation. The Clan also lose all-conference defenders **Alex Kleefeldt** and **Joel Malouf** and midfielder **Alex Rowley**.

The biggest surprise of the 2014 men’s soccer season, Northwest Nazarene comes into the year ranked third in the preseason poll. The Crusaders took second place in the GNAC last season with a 11-2-1 conference record and won their first Division II regional tournament game in program history against rival SFU. The Crusaders held pace statistically with Seattle Pacific, scoring 29 goals and allowing seven in conference play. Nationally, NNU was ranked fifth in save percentage (.853), ninth in shutout percentage (.50) and 13th in assists (43) and assists per game (2.15).

Midfielder **Julio Castillo**, GNAC Newcomer of the Year and NSCAA First Team All-American, highlights the list of returnees for NNU. Castillo scored one goal and nine assists. Forward **Erik Anderson** returns after scoring 10 goals and five assists and being named Second Team All-West Region. Other returners include midfielders **Rene Duevel**, **Jaime Verdin** and **Steven Garcia**. The team does lose two award winners in GNAC Defensive Player of the Year **Alfredo E. Ontiveros** and GNAC Freshman of the Year **Yannick Petzschke**. Ontiveros finished third in the nation in save percentage (.864) and seventh in goals against average (0.65).

2015 GNAC Preseason Men’s Soccer Coaches Poll

Team (1st Place Votes)	2014 Record (Finish)	Pts.
1. Seattle Pacific (7)	16-2-2 (12-1-1, 1st)	63
2. Simon Fraser (1)	11-5-2 (9-3-2, 3rd)	53
3. Northwest Nazarene	15-4-1 (11-2-1, 2nd)	50
4. Western Washington	9-8-1 (7-6-1, 4th)	39
5. Concordia	13-5-0 (12-2-0, CCC 1st)	31
6. MSU Billings	6-9-3 (6-7-1, 5th)	24
7. Saint Martins	3-14-1 (3-10-1, 7th)	15
8. Mary	5-9-2 (4-9-1, 6th)	13

Votes awarded on a 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis.

Western Washington finished in fourth place in the polls, exactly where they ended the season in 2014. They received 39 points in the poll with a 7-6-1 conference record. With seven starters and 14 letterwinners returning, the Vikings will have a similar core group to last season. Western Washington ranked in the middle of the conference across the board statistically, ending conference play with 25 goals scored and 18 goals allowed. The Vikings finished No. 8 in the NSCAA West Region poll at the end of the year.

Leading the charge into 2015 for WWU is Second Team All-GNAC midfielders **Luke Olney** and **Kurtis Pederson**. Olney led the team in assists (8) during his freshman year last season. Along with Pederson, midfielder **Uche Ugwoaba** also returns for his senior year after being named honorable mention. The Vikings lost leading point scorer (17) **Tye Hastings** and starting goalkeeper **Keegan Rogers**, but bring in four transfers to help fill the losses.

Concordia is voted in No. 5 for their first season in the GNAC. The Cavaliers finished their last season in the Cascade Collegiate Conference as regular-season champions for the fourth time in five years, but were knocked out in the conference semifinal match as the No. 1 seed. The team returns seven of 11 starters and 14 total letter winners after a 12-2 season in the CCC.

Head coach **Dan Birkey** was named CCC Coach of the Year as the Cavaliers return First Team All-CCC defender **Cody Guthrie** and honorable mention goalkeeper **Mitch McGraw**. However, the team loses two first-team players in **Sam Carmichael** and **Timur Zhividze**, along with second team selection **Ken Bodzewski**. The Cavaliers will be a team to watch as they transition into the GNAC.

With 24 points in the poll, Montana State Billings ranks sixth in this year's preseason poll. The Yellowjackets finished in fifth place in 2014, just one game behind the fourth-place Vikings. With a 6-7-1 conference record, the Yellowjackets return seven starters and 16 letterman. The team improved greatly off of a 2013 season when they won three games.

Rejoining MSUB is Second Team All-GNAC defender **Rhys Lambert** and honorable-mention defender **Sam Butterworth**. Lambert was the third-best scorer for the Yellowjackets with five goals and one assist while Butterworth led the team in assists (6) from the defender position. Goalkeeper **Tom Lohmann** will be back in net after posting the 44th most saves in the nation (73). The Yellowjackets lose top scorers **Thorge Jess** and **Colin Ralston**, but bring in a recruiting class of 12 players including four transfers.

Saint Martin's ranks seventh in the preseason poll after a seventh-place finish in 2014. The Saints ended the year strong, playing champion Seattle Pacific to a draw in their final match. The team struggled through the middle of the season, dropping seven-straight matches in October. The Saint's bring back six starters and 13 total letterwinners.

Kaleb Strawn, who received Second Team All-GNAC honors, headlines the list of returners for the Saints. Strawn started 17 matches as a sophomore defender, chipping in one assist on the offensive side. Junior **Jake Zimmer** finished with five points as a sophomore and **McKray Kohn** scored two goals and took the second most shots (21) for the Saints in his freshman season. Saint Martin's loses top scorer **Tody Tolo** (13 goals) and goalkeeper JJ Olson.

Finishing the preseason poll in eighth place with 13 points is Mary. The Maruaders finished the season in sixth place with a 4-9-1 GNAC record and had one of the top offenses in the conference with 26 goals. The team finished 24th in the nation in assists per game (1.81) and 39th in points per game (5.81) and scoring offense (2.00).

The Marauders offense remains intact with the team's top-three scorers all returning. Honorable Mention All-GNAC **Christoffer Nogueira** returns after scoring nine goals with six assists. Second Team All-GNAC defender **Jonathan Sellars** also rejoins the Maruaders to help secure the defensive side of the ball. The team loses goalkeeper **Michael Frenzel** and honorable-mention forward **Aaron McElwee**, but retain seven of their 11 starters.

The first regular-season games begin Thursday, Sept. 3 with five teams in action. Conference play starts up Saturday, Sept. 19 with all eight teams in action.

GNAC Men's Soccer Teams At A Glance

CONCORDIA

Head Coach: Dan Birkey (Warner Pacific, 1979, 365-172-23, 28th season)

Assistant Coaches: Andy Duvall, Nathan Walzer

2014 Overall Record: 13-5-0 **Conference Record (Finish):** 12-2-0 (CCC 1st)

Letterwinners Returning: 14

Starters Returning/Lost: 7/4

Returning Starters: Mitch McCaw (Jr., GK, Honorable Mention All-CCC), Corbyn May (Sr., M, 3 goals, 3 assists), Cody Guthrie (Sr., D, 1 goal, 2 assists, Honorable Mention NAIA All-American), Zak Naylor (Sr., F, 5 goals, 4 assists), B.J. Romac (Sr., F, 4 goals, Honorable Mention All-CCC), Ben Culpan (Sr., M, 4 goals, 4 assists), Billy Fleury (Jr., D, 1 goal), Eli Gaynor (Sr., D, 2 assists).

Key Losses: Quinn Sinsler (M), Sam Carmichael (M), Ken Bodzewski (M), Timur Zhividze (F), Tucker Bufton (M).

Key Newcomers: Mat Paine (Jr., F, 6-0, 175, Portland, Ore. – Yapapai College), Grant Alcorn (Fr., GK, 5-10, 180, Vancouver, Wash. – Union), Trent Lowe (Fr., M, 5-6, 155, Hillsboro, Ore. – Liberty), Tevin Lowe (Fr., M, 5-6, 155, Hillsboro, Ore. – Liberty).

MARY

Head Coach: Dave Cook (Mary, 2005, 29-79-13, 8th season)

Assistant Coaches: Dave Ripley, Ricardo Pierre-Louis

2014 Overall Record: 5-9-2 **Conference Record (Finish):** 4-9-1 (6th)

Letterwinners Returning: 9

Starters Returning/Lost: 7/4

Returning Starters: Alex Boyes (Sr., D, 1 goal, 2 assists), Christoffer Nogueira (So., F, 9 goals, 6 assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Jordan Pearce (Jr., F, 9 goals, 3 assists), Aaron Brennan (Jr., F, 4 goals, 5 assists), Jonathan Sellars (Sr., M, 1 goal, 1 assist, Second Team All-GNAC, Third Team NSCAA West All-Region), Adam Potter (Sr., M, 2 assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Liam Smallwood (Sr., D, 1 assist).

Key Losses: Michael Frenzel (GK), Jack West (D), Aaron McElwee (F), Cole Olson (M), Brad Kelly (M), Logan Christensen (M).

Key Newcomers: Ludvig Rhodin (Fr., GK, 5-11, 165, Helsingborg, Sweden – Filbornaskolan), Migel Bartolo (Jr., M, 5-8, 160, Houston, Texas – Presentation College), André Almqvist (Fr., D, 5-10, 165, Trollhättan, Sweden - Folkuniversitetets Gymnasium), Ken Metellus (So., M, 5-11, 175, Cap Haitian, Haiti), Leon Grida (Fr., M, 5-8- 175, Fremantle, Western Australia – Seton Catholic College), Nathan Phillips (So., D, 6-1, 195, Gillette, Wyo. – Springfield College).

MONTANA STATE BILLINGS

Head Coach: Alex Balog (5th season)

Assistant Coaches: Thomas Chameraud, Kyle Emerick

2014 Overall Record: 6-9-3 **Conference Record (Finish):** 6-7-1 (5th)

Letterwinners Returning: 16

Starters Returning/Lost: 6/4

Returning Starters: Rhys Lambert (Jr., M, 5 goals, 1 assists), Sam Butterworth (Sr., D, 6 assists), Niklas Schregel (So., M, 1 goal, 1 assist), Tom Lohmann (Jr., GK, 2 assists), Cameron Lee (Sr., D), Fernando Perez (Sr., D), Thomas Saltwell (Jr., D).

Key Losses: Thorge Jess (F), Colin Ralston (F)

Key Newcomers: Guido Riffeser (Sr., M, 5-9, Selva Val Gardena, Italy – Nova Southeastern), Thiago Novis (Jr., F, 6-1, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – Fresno Pacific), Eli Herman (So. D/M, 6-0, Bozeman, Mont. – North Idaho College), Ricardo Palomino (So., F, 6-2, Puebla, Mexico - Northeastern State).

NORTHWEST NAZARENE

Head Coach: Coe Michaelson (College of Idaho, 2002, 8th season)

Assistant Coaches: Stephen Marshall, Dane Manley

2014 Overall Record: 15-4-1 **Conference Record (Finish):** 11-2-1 (2nd)

Letterwinners Returning: 14

Starters Returning/Lost: 8/5

Returning Starters: Erik Anderson (Sr., F, 10 goals, 5 assists, Second Team All-West Region, Second Team All-GNAC), Rene Duevel (Jr., M, 5 goals 2 assists), Julio Castillo (Sr., M, 1 goal, 9 assists, First Team All-American, First Team All-West Region, First Team All-GNAC, GNAC Newcomer of the Year), Jaime Verdin (Sr., M, 1 goal, 6 assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Steven Garcia (Jr., F, 4 assists), Luke Broz (Sr., D, 3 assists), Stephen Davidson (Jr., D, 1 assist), Bryan Neba (Sr., M)

Key Losses: Fredy Razo (F), Alfredo E. Ontiveros (GK), Juan Perez (D), Yannick Petzschke).

Key Newcomers: Fernando Alvarez (Jr., D/F, 6-2, 170, San Diego, Calif. – Arizona Western College), Soriba "Ebu" Camara (Jr., F, 6-1, 167, Conakry, Guinea – Barton (Kan.) CC), Keith Fujita (Jr., D/MF, 5-10, 160, Fontana, Calif. – Mt. San Antonio College) Jacob Hillyer (Fr., GK, 6-0, 190, Fort Lewis, Wash. – Bellarmine Prep.).

GNAC Men's Soccer Teams At A Glance

SAINT MARTIN'S

Head Coach: Rob Walker (9th season)

Assistant Coaches: Kyle Jones, Brandon Scott

2014 Overall Record: 3-14-1 **Conference Record (Finish):** 3-9-1 (7th)

Letterwinners Returning: 13

Starters Returning/Lost: 8/5

Returning Starters: Jake Zimmer (Jr., F, 1 goal, 3 assists), McKray Kohn (So., F, 2 goals), Max Harvey (Jr., M/F, 2 assists) Kaleb Strawn (Jr., D, 1 assist, Second Team All-GNAC).

Key Losses: Tody Tolo (F), Rene Caro (M), Brandon Meyer (M) Luke Chouinard (D), J.J. Olson (GK).

Key Newcomers: Steven Chu (Fr., M/D, 5-10, 150, Des Moines, Wash. – Mount Rainier), Ian Fry (Jr., GK, 6-1, 190, Tacoma, Wash. – Tacoma CC), Mamadou Leigh (Fr., M, 6-0, 145, Tukwila, Wash. – Foster), Alexis Lopez (Fr., F, 5-8, 143, Glendale, Ariz – Tesseract)

SEATTLE PACIFIC

Head Coach: Mark Collings (Seattle Pacific, 1999, 80-34-20, 8th year)

Assistant Coaches: Kevin Reiman, Erik Skipper, James Ward

2014 Overall Record: 16-2-2 **Conference Record (Finish):** 12-1-1 (1st)

Letterwinners Returning: 18

Starters Returning/Lost: 9/2

Returning Starters: Davis Karaica (Jr., D, 1 goal, Second Team All-American), Stephen MacDonald (Jr., F, 9 goals, 8 assists, Third Team All-American), Bryson Pavel (Sr., D, 2 goals, 2 assists, Third Team All-American), Cody Lang (Jr., GK, 0.47 GAA, Second Team All-Region), Danny Olivas (Sr., M, 3 goals, 6 assists, First Team All-GNAC), Chaz Jenkins (Jr., M, 1 goal, Second Team All-GNAC), Jordan Kollars (Jr., M, 3 goals, 4 assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Ian Adams (Sr., M, 1 goal, 1 assist, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Jeffrey Collings (Jr., D, 1 assist, Honorable Mention All-GNAC).

Starters Lost: Sean Russell (F), Evan Robicheau (D).

Key Newcomers: Jacob Bohl (Fr., M, Bonney Lake, Wash. – Bonney Lake), Parker Conaway (Fr., D, Albuquerque, N.M. – Volcano Vista), Michael Duvall (Fr., M, Renton, Wash. – Liberty).

SIMON FRASER

Head Coach: Clint Schneider (0-0-0, 1st season)

Assistant Coaches: Kevin Harmse, Tyler Baldoc

2014 Overall Record: 11-5-2 **Conference Record (Finish):** 9-3-2 (3rd)

Letterwinners Returning: 11

Starters Returning/Lost: 9/5

Returning Starters: Ryan Dhillon (Sr., M, 4 goals, 6 assists), Robert Hyams (Jr., D, 6 assists, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Brandon Watson (Jr., Gk, 0.88 GAA, 6 shutouts, Second Team All-GNAC), Nico Espinosa (Jr., M, 2 goals, 2 assists), Callum Whittaker (Sr., D, 2 goals).

Starters Lost: Jovan Blagojevic (F), Alex Rowley (M), Alex Kleefeldt (D), Joel Malouf (D).

Key Newcomers: Mamadi Camara (Jr., M, 6-3, 180, Montreal, Quebec – Champlain College Saint Lambert), James Fraser (Fr., F, 6-2, 180, Penticton, B.C. – Penticton)

WESTERN WASHINGTON

Head Coach: Greg Brisbon (20-12-4, 3rd season)

Assistant Coaches: Conner Moe

2014 Overall Record: 9-8-1 **Conference Record (Finish):** 7-6-1 (4th)

Letterwinners Returning: 14

Starters Returning/Lost: 7/4

Returning Starters: Luke Olney (So., M, Second Team All-GNAC), Kurtis Pederson (Sr., M, Second Team All-GNAC), Uche Ugwoaba (Sr., M, Honorable Mention All-GNAC).

Starters Lost: Tye Hastings (F), Keegan Rogers (GK), Gabriele Zaccagnini (M), Troy McCarty (D).

Key Newcomers: Eleazar Galvan (Jr., F, Skagit Valley CC), Adam Talley (Jr., D, North Idaho JC), Brady Ulen (Jr., F, North Idaho JC), Thomas Spragg (F/M, Washington).