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Contact: Iain Dexter, Assistant Information Director
 503-820-8362 • idexter@gnacsports.com

WWU Preseason Favorites for Fourth Straight GNAC Women’s Soccer Title

PORTLAND, Ore. – With three straight regular-season titles under its belt, Western Washington is poised for another run at the crown after being picked as the favorite in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference’s 2015 Preseason Coaches Poll.

The Vikings received six out of nine possible first-place votes, leading the way with 78 total points in the poll after an 11-0-3 conference record in 2014. The team earned the No. 1 seed in the NCAA Division II West Regional Tournament, but was knocked out in the semifinal match by Cal State Stanislaus.

Western Washington was led by in 2014 with a standout defense that allowed just four goals in conference play. The Vikings ranked among the best in the nation in multiple defensive categories, ranking second save percentage (.913) ranking second in the nation, third in goals-against average (0.31), and fifth in shutout percentage (.667). The Vikings finished the season ranked No. 17 in the NSCAA Division II Coaches Top-25 Poll.

The Vikings’ top-ranked defense took a blow this off-season, graduating GNAC Defensive Player of the Year **Kim Cooper** and Daktronics All-American defender **Brianna Jones**. The team also loses defender **Katherine Miccile**, who played in a school-record 84 matches over her four years at WWU. Overall, Western Washington returns 17 letter winners and eight out of 11 starters, including First Team All-GNAC forwards **Jessica Bertucci** and **Catherine Miles**, and second team goalkeeper **Ashley Haden**, who ranked third in the nation in goals-allowed average (0.32) and save percentage (.908).

Seattle Pacific is picked second, earning 71 points and two first-place votes. The Falcons won their second straight GNAC Tournament last year, upsetting No. 1 seed Western Washington in the final. Seattle Pacific finished the regular season tied for second with Montana State Billings with a 9-3-2 record. The Falcons also competed in the NCAA West Regional Tournament, but lost to eventual tournament champion Cal State Stanislaus.

Seattle Pacific paced the conference offensively with 28 goals and ranked 50th nationally with 38 total goals. GNAC Player of the Year **Isabel Farrell** returns to SPU for her senior year after an eight-goal, seven-assist 2014. The Falcons also return junior forward **Hannah Huesers** after she led the conference in goals with 15, ranking her 16th in the nation.

Central Washington and Montana State Billings tied for this year’s third spot with 52 points apiece. The Wildcats received one first-place vote in the poll after finishing in fourth place in 2014 with a 7-4-3 conference record. The Wildcats return an experienced group, with eight of 11 starters and 17 of 20 letter winners coming back to Ellensburg.

Mackenzie Nolte, GNAC Freshman of the Year leads Central Washington’s returnees after setting a CWU freshman record with eight goals. The defensive core of **Aubrey Rodgers**, **Abby Litka** and **Allie Bohnett** will help the Wildcats stay in contention while junior midfielder **Keilin Farrand** returns after a three-goal, two-assist season. Central Washington loses two key members of the team, including unanimous First Team All-GNAC selection **Hadli Farrand** and honorable mention all-conference goalkeeper **Kayla Lipston**.

The surprise of 2014, Montana State Billings rank tied for third in this year’s poll after being picked for fifth place a year ago. The Yellowjackets shocked

Team (1st Place Votes)	2014 Record (Finish)	Pts.
1. Western Washington (6)	16-1-4 (11-0-3, 1st)	78
2. Seattle Pacific (2)	12-5-3 (9-3-2, Tie 2nd)	71
T3. Central Washington (1)	8-8-3 (7-4-3, 4th)	52
T3. MSU Billings	11-4-2 (9-3-2, Tie 2nd)	52
5. Concordia	18-2-2 (7-1-1, CCC 2nd)	51
6. Western Oregon	6-8-4 (4-6-4, 5th)	37
7. Northwest Nazarene	4-11-3 (3-10-1, Tie 6th)	28
8. Saint Martin’s	3-13-2 (3-10-1, Tie 6th)	22
9. Simon Fraser	2-16-0 (2-12-0, 8th)	14

Votes awarded on a 9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis.

the GNAC with a 9-3-2 conference record, earning them the No. 2 seed in GNAC Tournament. The Yellowjackets lost two First-Team All-GNAC players in **Alisa Sagdahl** and **Haley McFarlane**. Sagdahl was one of the top offensive threats in the conference, ranking fourth in points (seven goals, five assists). She led the Yellowjackets in both categories. McFarlane was a shutdown defender last season for Billings, helping post a 32nd ranked goals-against average (0.67) in the nation.

Midfielder **Katlyn Lokay** is the Yellowjackets top returning scorer, netting four goals in 2014. **Jessica Spang** had an impressive freshman season with two goals and three assists for the Yellowjackets as the team also welcomes 12 incoming freshman this year for what will surely be one of the youngest teams in the conference.

Newcomer Concordia is voted into the fifth spot in their first GNAC season. Sitting at 51 points, the Cavaliers join the conference with high expectations from their peers. A year removed from capturing an NAIA national championship, Concordia finished its 2014 campaign at 18-2-2. The Cavaliers outscored their opponents 41-10 and reached the NAIA National Quarterfinals after taking first place in the Cascade Collegiate Conference Tournament.

The Cavaliers lost five of their 11 starters from last season, but retain 18 of 24 letter winners. The team loses First Team NAIA All-American and CCC Defensive Player of the Year **Jasmin Ayala**, along with Second Team NAIA All-American **Erin Huisingh**, who finished with 19 points. The group of returners is highlighted by former CCC Freshman of the Year **Bobbi Eckler** and Third-Team NAIA All-American **McKayla Madison**. Junior **Olivia Brock** and senior **Nicole Franklin** will return between the pipes for the Crusaders after combining for a 0.45 goals allowed average.

After a fifth-place finish last season, Western Oregon has dropped to sixth in the preseason poll with 37 points. The Wolves just missed the cut for the conference tournament as they could not catch Central Washington in the final week. Much like Western Washington, WOU excelled on defense, allowing 13 goals in 14 conference matches, but were not able to score on the other end enough to win consistently.

The team does bring back key offensive contributors in leading point scorers **Makana Pundyke** (9) and **Taylor Higa** (8) and midfielder **Mariah Konyn**. Konyn was named to the Second Team All-GNAC while Pundyke was honorable mention. While the defense as a whole was tough to beat, goalkeeper **Amanda Rose Johnson** was the highlight of the season for the Wolves. Johnson ranked fifth in the nation in save percentage (0.890) leading to her First-Team All-GNAC selection. Along with Johnson, defender **JoEllen DeLeon** was named to the conference's first-team, but also like Johnson, the Wolves will have to fill her position after graduating. Western Oregon also loses senior defender **Peyton Moon**, who received Honorable Mention All-GNAC. The Wolves signed six new players, including two transfers, during the offseason to help bolster the roster.

Northwest Nazarene comes into the season ranked seventh in the preseason poll with 28 points, but has a chance to build off of last season with a young core. Led by sophomore goalkeeper **Daniele Ortiz**, who ranked 13th in the nation in saves (117), the Crusaders will need to help take the load off the young goalie after facing the most shots in the conference in 2014. **Lexi Fesenbek**, a senior forward, broke the school record in assists (12), ranking her first in the conference and 11th in the nation. Fesenbek was also fifth nationally in assists per game (0.67).

Ortiz and Fesenbek both return along with senior forward **Nicole Nsa**, who paced the team in goals (5). The Crusaders lose just one senior from last season in forward **Sarah Blum** who ranked third on the team in points (9). The team will be one to watch with only one key loss and a starting lineup last year that was comprised primarily of underclassmen.

Saint Martin's ranks eighth in this year's preseason poll as the Saints come off a tough season in 2014 which saw the team finish with a 3-10-1 GNAC record. Last season, SMU slipped to seventh place in the final standings after being ranked fifth in the preseason poll. The Saints were competitive throughout the season, though, with eight of their 14 conference matches were decided by one goal.

The Saints return Second Team All-GNAC defender **Taylor Gersch** and goalkeeper **Sunny De Boer**, who finished third in the conference and 39th in the nation in saves (95). Forward **Kelli Bannerman** also returns in her junior season after being named the 2013 GNAC Freshman of the Year and to the all-conference Second Team. The team, however, returns just four of their 11 starters, and will look for contributions from their nine-player recruiting class. The Saint's lose their top scorer in **Sasha Dini**, who was named All-GNAC Honorable Mention in 2014 after scoring five goals.

GNAC Women's Soccer Preseason Release – Aug. 20, 2015

Rounding out the 2015 GNAC Preseason Women's Soccer Coaches Poll is Simon Fraser with 14 points. The Clan ended their 2014 season on a 10-game losing streak after opening the year 2-2 in conference play. The season was an improvement over previous seasons, with SFU winning their most matches since 2010.

Leading scorer and All-GNAC Honorable Mention forward **Olivia Aguiar** returns after potting three goals with one assist. Goalkeeper **Priya Sandhu** will be back with the Clan in her sophomore season after starting 16 games in net. The team remains relatively intact and will look to continue their upward trend into 2015.

The regular season begins with the first counting matches Thursday, Sept. 3, with seven of the nine teams in action. Conference play begins Saturday, Sept. 19.

Team Capsules Follow On Next Page

GNAC Women's Soccer Teams At A Glance

CENTRAL WASHINGTON

Head Coach: Michael Farrand (Point Loma, 1984, 99-147-25, 16th season)

Assistant Coach: Amber Simms (Graduate Assistant)

2014 Overall Record: 8-8-3 **Conference Record (Finish):** 7-4-3 (4th)

Letterwinners Returning: 17

Starters Returning/Lost: 8/3

Returning Starters: Mackenzie Nolte (M, So., Second Team All-GNAC, GNAC Freshman of the Year, Daktronics All-West Region Second Team, 8 goals), Kelin Farrand (M, Jr., 3 goals, 2 assists), Lauren Duty (F, Sr., 1 goal), Whitney Lowe (F, So., 2 assists), Meghan Ward (M, Jr.), Aubrey Rodgers (D, Sr.), Abby Litka (D, So.), Allie Bohnett (D, Jr.).

Key Losses: Hadli Farrand (M).

Key Newcomers: Isabelle Severens (M, Fr., 5-6, Bremerton, Wash - Klahowya), Kennedy Anson (F, Fr. 5-5, Renton, Wash. - Kentridge)

CONCORDIA

Head Coach: Grant Landy (Cal Poly, 1989, 311-58-24, 18th season)

Assistant Coaches: Jon Kiestler, Rob Warnell, Maureen Fitzgerald

2014 Overall Record: 18-2-2 **Conference Record (Finish):** 7-1-1 (2nd); CCC Tournament Champions; NAIA National Quarterfinals

Letterwinners Returning: 18

Starters Returning/Lost: 6/5

Returning Starters: Olivia Brock (Jr., GK, 10-1-1; 0.52 GAA; .829 save pct.), Shannon McMahon (Jr., D, 3 goals, 1 assist), Martha Heaps (So., D, 2 goals), Ariel Kanable (Sr., M, 5 goals, 5 assists; Honorable Mention All-CCC), Bobbi Eckler (Jr., F, 3 goals, 5 assists, CCC Freshman of the Year), McKayla Madison (Sr., M, 1 assist, Third Team NAIA All-American).

Key Losses: Annika Hayman (M), Jasmin Ayala (D), Erin Huisingh (F), Ashley Ames (F), Becca Long (D), Alicia Kolter (F).

Key Newcomers: Kayla Braunthal (Fr., M, 5-0, Honolulu, Hawaii - Mililani), Gabrielle Ewing (Fr., M, 5-7, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii - Hawaii Prep), Taylor Cook (Fr., GK, 5-10, Meridian, Idaho - Rocky Mountain).

MONTANA STATE BILLINGS

Head Coach: Wojtek Krakowiak (41-21-9, 5th year)

Assistant Coach: Stephen Cavallo

2014 Overall Record: 11-4-2 **Conference Record (Finish):** 9-3-2 (2nd)

Letterwinners Returning: 9

Starters Returning/Lost: 5/7

Returning Starters: Katlyn Lokay (Sr., M, 4 goals), Jessica Spang (So., F, 2 goals, 3 assists), Kari Kastelic (Jr., D, 2 goals), Dana Lubieniecki (Jr., M, 1 goal 2 assists), Brittney Greenback (Jr., M).

Key Losses: Alisa Sagdahl (F), Haley McFarlane (D).

Key Newcomers: Hayley Warren (Jr., F, 5-11, Maple Valley, Wash. - Shoreline CC), Jordan Bethune (Fr., F, 5-8 Camas, Wash.), Sarah Coghlan (Fr., D, 5-6, Billings, Mont. - Billings), Lili Delgadillo (Fr., GK, 5-8, Vancouver, Wash. – Columbia River).

NORTHWEST NAZARENE

Head Coach: Mary Trigg (Fresno State, 2008, 3rd season)

Assistant Coaches: Jen O'Neill, Ebie Hepworth, Dane Manley

2014 Overall Recorded: 4-13-3 **Conference Record (Finish):** 3-10-1 (6th)

Letterwinners Returning: 13

Starters Returning/Lost: 10/1

Returning Starters: Lexi Fesenbek (Sr., F, 4 goals, 12 assists, 2nd Team All-GNAC), Nicole Nsa (Sr., F, 5 goals, 1 assist), Laura Seymour (Sr., M, 3 goals, 3 assists), Ashley Cook-Cox (So., M, 3 goals, 1 assist, Second Team All-GNAC), Makena Dandley (So., D, 2 goals), Sarah Jenkins (Jr., M, 1 goal, 1 assist, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Kayla Williams (Jr., D, 1 assist), Mabinty Kanu (So., D), McCrean Nirider (Sr., D), Danielle Ortiz (So., GK, 3 shutouts, GNAC All-Academic Team).

Key Losses: Sarah Blum (F)

Key Newcomers: Chloe Sholtz (Fr., GK, 5-5, Spokane Valley, Wash. - Central Valley), Hannah Holm (So., M, 5-4, Spokane, Wash. – University of Minnesota), Nicolette Clark (Fr., F, 5-6, Sacramento, Calif. – St. Francis), Kaisa Tsuruta (Fr., MF, 5-2, Nelson, New Zealand – Nayland College), Olivia Carter (Fr., D, 5-4, Mill Creek, Wash. – Henry M. Jackson), Leslie Irwin (So., D, Yakima, Wash – West Valley).

GNAC Women's Soccer Teams At A Glance

SAINT MARTIN'S

Head Coach: Rob Walker (9th season)

Assistant Coaches: Bre Giove, Kyle Jones

2014 Overall Recorded: 3-13-2 **Conference Record (Finish):** 2-10-1 (7th)

Letterwinners Returning: 8

Starters Returning/Lost: 4/7

Returning Starters: Sunny De Boer (R-So., GK, 95 Saves), Abby McFaul (Sr., F/M, 3 Goals, 2 Assists, 2014 Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Taylor Gersch (Jr., D, 2 Assists, 2014 Second Team All-GNAC), Kelli Bannerman (Jr., F, 3 Goals, 2013 GNAC Freshman of the Year, Second Team All-GNAC).

Key Losses: Hannah Masee (F/M), Sasha Dini (M/F).

Key Newcomers: Carly Bannerman (Fr., D, 5-5, Ferndale, Wash. – Ferndale), Hattie North (Fr., D, 5-8, Bellingham, Wash. – Bellingham), Gloria Petri (Fr., M, 5-7, Scottsdale Ariz. – Desert Mountain), Kylee Sarchett (Fr., F/M, 5-3, Puyallup, Wash. – Graham-Kapowsin), Hannah Frakes (Jr., M, 5-4, Boise, Idaho – Mountain View).

SEATTLE PACIFIC

Head Coach: Arby Busey (Villanova, 1993, 0-0-0, 1st season)

Assistant Coaches: Sean Connors, Chalise Baysa

2014 Overall Recorded: 12-5-3 **Conference Record (Finish):** 9-3-2

Letterwinners Returning: 17

Starters Returning/Lost: 7/4

Returning Starters: Hannah Huesers (Jr., F, 15 goals, 1 assist, First Team All-Region), Isabel Farrell (Sr., M, 8 goals, 7 assists, GNAC Player of the Year, NSCAA Second Team All-American), Laura Moore (Sr., M, 4 goals 7 assists, First Team All-GNAC), Shayla Page (Sr., D, 2 goals, 1 assist, Second Team All-GNAC), Ashley Shaw (Sr., D, 1 goal 1 assist, Honorable Mention All-GNAC).

Key Losses: Alexa Hughes (GK), Demi Waitley (M), Alexa Diaz (M), Arden Matro (D).

Key Newcomers: Brooke Lancaster (Fr., F, 5-4, Lake Tapps, Wash. - Sumner), Maddie Sjothun (So., D, 5-4, Vancouver, Wash. – Northern Arizona).

SIMON FRASER

Head Coach: Annie Hamel (Maine, 2003, 2-16-0, 2nd season)

Assistant Coaches: Anna Picarelli, Lee Tregonning, Chris Sargeant

2014 Overall Recorded: 2-16 **Conference Record (Finish):** 2-12 (8th)

Letterwinners Returning: 10

Starters Returning/Lost: 8/5

Returning Starters: Priya Sandhu (So., GK, 2 shutouts), Olivia Aquiar (Sr., F, 3 goals, 1 assist), Sierra Leung (So., M, 2 goals), Elishah Jilling (So., M, 2 goals), Devon Kollmyer (Jr., M, 3 assists), Teagan Rae Sorokan (Jr., D), Brianna Morrison (Sr., MF), Mikaeka Guerreiro (So., MF).

Key Losses: Sophie D'souza (F), Aja Choy-Halo (M), Ruby Sandhu (CB).

Key Newcomers: Katelyn Erhardtsen (Fr., F, Maple Ridge, BC – Samuel Robertson Technical), Monpreet Heer (F, Surrey, BC – Burnaby North Secondary), Samantha Donald (Fr., M, Surrey, BC – Johnston Heights Secondary).

WESTERN OREGON

Head Coach: Steve Ancheta (Oregon State, 1991, 5th season)

Assistant Coach: Luke Babson

2014 Overall Recorded: 6-8-4 **Conference Record (Finish):** 4-6-4 (5th)

Letterwinners Returning: 10

Starters Returning/Lost: 7/4

Returning Starters: Makana Pundyke (M/F, Sr., 4 goals, Honorable Mention All-GNAC), Allison Frost (M, Sr., 2 goals), Mariah Konyon (M, Jr., 1 assist, Second Team All-GNAC), Taylor Higa (F/M, Jr., 2 goals, 4 assists), Caitlyn Castillo (M/D, Sr.), Hailey Berg (D, Sr.), Alison Sprecher (D, Jr., 1 goal, 1 assist)

Key Losses: JoEllen DeLeon (M), Amanda Rose Johnson (GK), Tajja Bjorgo (M), Peyton Moon (D).

Key Newcomers: Dani Payne (M, Jr., Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif. - Trabuco Hills/Chandler-Gilbert), Dacia Alexander (M, Fr., Lacey, Wash. - Sumner), Morgan Roan (M, Fr., Puyallup, Wash. - Puyallup).

GNAC Women's Soccer Teams At A Glance

WESTERN WASHINGTON

Head Coach: Travis Connell (Seattle Pacific, 1996, 157-62-24, 13th season)

Assistant Coaches: Claire Morgan, Jamie Arthurs

2014 Overall Recorded: 16-1-4 **Conference Record (Finish):** 11-0-3 (1st)

Letterwinners Returning: 17

Starters Returning/Lost: 8/3

Returning Starters: Jessica Bertucci (Sr., F/M, First team NSCAA and Second Team Daktronics West Region, 1st team All-GNAC), Ashley Haden (Sr., GK, Second Team Daktronics & NSCAA West Region, Second Team All-GNAC), Catherine Miles (Sr., F, Second Team Daktronics and NSCAA West Region, First Team All-GNAC, 8 goals), Elise Aylward (Jr., F, Second Team All-GNAC), Emily Webster (So., M, Second Team All-GNAC, 5 assists), Delanee Nilles (Sr., M).

Key Losses: Brianna Jones (D), Kim Cooper (M), Katherine Miccile (D).

Key Newcomers: Ashley Homer (Jr., G, Puyallup, Wash., - College of Saint Rose), Malia Maack (So., D, Spokane, Wash. - New Mexico Highlands), Savanna Moorehouse (Sr., F, Bonney Lake, Wash. - Central Washington), Gabriela Pelogi (Fr., F, Federal Way, Wash.).

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