

For Release: December 3, 2008

CCCAA WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW

The defending state champion Warriors of El Camino College are the clear favorite coming into this year's California Community College Athletic Association Women's Volleyball Championship at Pasadena City College Friday-Sunday, December 5-7.

Six matches will take place on the opening day with concurrent matches played on courts 1 and 2 at PCC's Hutto-Patterson Gymnasium at 3 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. Six more matches will be played on day 2 with concurrent matches at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. At 4 p.m., the tourney becomes a main court attraction for the last two matches (also at 7 p.m.) on Saturday and the final two on Sunday (10 a.m. and 1 p.m.).

Ranked No. 2 in the final regular season State Top 25 poll, South Coast Conference champion El Camino had one obstacle taken care of with the regional second-round elimination of No. 1-ranked LA Pierce by No. 11 Orange Coast. Pierce had handed El Camino (27-1) its only loss of the 2008 season back in September's San Diego Mesa Tournament.

The Warriors return two players off the 2007 All-CCCAA Tournament Team in MVP and setter Sam Taylor and libero Karina Woehrstein. Add in Amrita Tuladhar, Ashley Hardy, and Cristina Towers and that's five players who all played significant roles when El Camino captured last year's state title at Fresno Pacific University. El Camino won the 1-game playoff against Golden West to become the first team ever to win the state tournament by winning two matches and a playoff on the final day.

Joining El Camino in the South field are three Orange Empire Conference teams in champion and No. 8-ranked Irvine Valley (18-5), second-place and 9th-ranked Fullerton (18-5), and the underdog third-place Pirates (20-4) of OCC. Prior to El Camino's state title of '07, the OEC produced an amazing 14 consecutive state championship squads. The most recent two recorded by Orange Coast in 2005-2006. Golden West won the other 12. Fullerton took third place at the '07 championship and return All-CCCAA Tournament selection Leah Haproff.

Santa Rosa Junior College, the North's No. 1-ranked team since October, appears to have the best shot at breaking the 31-year championship drought for the North region.

The state's No. 3-ranked Bear Cubs are 32-1 coming into the CCCAA Final 8 with their only loss coming at the hands of Big 8 Conference foe and fellow tourney qualifier Sacramento City, the No. 7-ranked team. The Panthers (24-5) beat SRJC in a 5-gamer at the San Jose Tournament in September, but Santa Rosa won both

conference battles with Sacramento, one in four games and the other in five, to win the Big 8 crown. Returning All-CCCAA Tournament selection Michelle Johnson led Sacramento to a fourth-place finish at last year's championship. Johnson set a tournament championship single-match, serving record last year with 10 aces in eliminating Santa Rosa (finished 5th).

The other two North state tourney participants are Central Valley champion and No. 13-ranked Fresno City (25-5), a team on a school-record 17-match winning streak, and this year's Cinderella squad, Feather River College, a program making its first-ever appearance at the Final 8 tourney. Feather River (21-9) finished in second place in a strong year by the Golden Valley Conference, then upset No. 6-ranked Sierra in the NorCal second-round regionals. The Golden Eagles were rated No. 17 in the last poll, but bounced around the poll throughout the year, going as low as No. 23 on Nov. 18.

The tourney is being played at PCC's Hutto-Patterson Gymnasium for the first time since 2001 (also hosted in 1999). Golden West won the title both of those years. In '01, Orange Coast was state runner-up and El Camino placed fourth. In '99, Sacramento placed fourth.

The last time the South hosted the championship tournament was in 2003 when the state budget crisis that year limited the event to a 4-team, single-elimination format. Irvine Valley, the host of the tourney, took state runner-up.

One more plus for El Camino is it is the only team that already played at PCC this season when the Warriors swept the host Lancers in South Coast play on October 8.

For tourney matchups, game times, and event coverage, go to the CCCAA website at

<http://www.coasports.org/Volleyball/Women/>

Records of CCCAA Final 8 participants against each other this season:

El Camino: 1-0 v. Fullerton

Irvine Valley: 1-1 v. Fullerton, 1-1 v. Orange Coast

Fullerton: 0-1 v. El Camino, 1-1 v. Irvine Valley, 1-1 v. Orange Coast

Orange Coast: 1-1 v. Irvine Valley, 1-1 v. Fullerton

Santa Rosa: 2-1 v. Sacramento City, 2-0 v. Fresno City

Sacramento City: 1-2 v. Santa Rosa, 0-1 v. Fresno City

Fresno City: 0-2 v. Santa Rosa, 1-0 v. Sacramento City, 3-0 v. Feather River

Feather River: 0-3 v. Fresno City

Preview written by Robert Lewis, CCCWVCA publicist, rmlewis@pasadena.edu

