

WOMEN

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build the team around in senior point guard Milica Vukadinovic.

Vukadinovic was named a first-team All-American by *Street and Smith* after finishing in the top 10 in five categories, including points and assists. Six-foot-2 center Kesha Martin returns up front for California after petitioning for an extra year of eligibility when an injury limited her to just six games in 1990-91.

Depth will be the biggest problem for Cal, who returns only one player besides Vukadinovic and Martin that averaged more than two points per game a year ago. Newcomer Jackie Lear has stepped up during the preseason and is averaging more than 15 points per game.

Pac-10 Prediction: 12-6



3. USC — USC returns arguably the league's most exciting player, Lisa Leslie, and three other starters from last year's team, which finished second in the conference and won two NCAA tournament games. Leslie has dunked in practice and is looking to be the first woman to ever do so in a game. Leslie averaged 20 points and 8.4 rebounds per game a year ago.

Forwards Kim Gessig and Jualeah Woods are back up front next to Leslie, and Joni Easterly returns in the backcourt. With six new players on the team, head coach Marianne Stanley will have plenty of candidates for the other guard spot.

Pac-10 Prediction: 11-7



4. Arizona State — The Sun Devils surprised everyone last year by qualifying for the NCAA tournament after going 20-9 and finishing fifth in the conference. Arizona State returns all five starters from last year and lost only one key bench performer from 1992.

Point guard Ryneldi Becenti is coming off a spectacular debut season in Tempe last year, when she averaged 13.2 points and a league-high 6.9 assists per game, and will once again team with Frozena Jerro in the backcourt.

Six-foot-6 center Monique Ambers averaged 8.3 points and 7.2 rebounds last year and is looking to establish herself as one of the premier centers in the league this year. She is joined by forwards Jovonne Smith and Lisa Salsman up front.

Pac-10 Prediction: 10-8



5. Oregon — The Ducks' season will once again depend on the team's ability to overcome injuries to key players. So far, the Ducks have survived injuries to guard Jessica Schutt and forward Debbie Sporcich, going 2-1 while each player was sidelined. Forward Cindy Murphy is the latest Duck to be hampered by injury, but she is expected to return after this weekend's games.

Oregon's backcourt has stepped up during the absence of Debbie Sporcich, with Missy Stowell, Karen Healea and Peggy Swadener heating up from outside. Sara Wilson will get attention from opponents without Sporcich next to her, but she should still be a force inside.

Pac-10 Prediction: 9-9



6. Arizona — Arizona has yet to establish itself as a Pac-10 contender, but took a big step toward doing so when hiring head coach Joan Bonvicini last year. Bonvicini won more than 75 percent of her games during 12 years at Long Beach State, but her Wildcats struggled to a 3-15 conference record a year ago.

Arizona returns four starters from a year ago, including forward Margo Clark, who was named to the all-conference team after averaging 17.4 points and 8.4 rebounds per game. Junior Megan Magee also returns up front after a year in which she averaged 11 points and 5.5 rebounds per game.

Pac-10 Prediction: 9-9



7. UCLA — UCLA boasts the greatest female athlete in the conference in Natalie Williams. Williams averaged 21.5 points and 13.8 rebounds per game last year, but she missed the preseason because she was playing for the Bruins' NCAA runner-up volleyball team.

Forward Amy Jalewalie and guard Nicole Anderson are the other two returning starters from last year's third-place team in the conference. Depth may be a problem as only four players on this year's squad saw extended action last year.

Pac-10 Prediction: 8-10



8. Washington — The Huskies, once a national power in women's hoops, have fallen on hard times. Washington had won at least 23 games and qualified for the NCAA tournament for six consecutive years before last season's 17-11 finish.

The Huskies lost their top two scorers from a year ago, but return three starters. Tara Davis is the top returning scorer, averaging 9.2 points per outing and finishing among league leaders in three-point percentage and steals. Center Rhonda Smith was named to the conference's all-freshman team after averaging 7.5 points and four rebounds per game.

Pac-10 Prediction: 6-12



9. Oregon State — The Beavers went 3-15 in the Pac-10 last year and lost leading scorer and rebounder Judy Shannon to graduation, but they have gone 6-3 in the preseason. Sonjhia Fleming and Missy Smith are the top two returning scorers, averaging 11.7 and 7.2 points per game, respectively. Forward Angela Allen also returns, and the addition of four talented freshmen has optimism running high in Corvallis.

Pac-10 Prediction: 5-13



10. Washington State — The Cougars return three starters from last year, including Camille Thompson, who averaged 14.2 points and 6.1 rebounds while leading the conference with a 58.8 shooting percentage. Six-foot-8 center Kathy Weber will also see time up front.

The biggest problem for Washington State head coach Harold Rhodes will be finding guards to replace the departed Heather Norman and Darla Williamson.

Pac-10 Prediction: 3-15

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