

Michigan, Kentucky can't touch UCSB

The best record this season in college basketball doesn't belong to any of the Final Four teams. Or any Division I program.

At 33-0, Cal State Bakersfield is the first college team on any level to finish a perfect season with that many victories.

Three thousand fans chanting "33 and 0" jammed the city's small airport Sunday night to greet the Division II national champions. The Roadrunners defeated Troy State (Ala.) 85-72 Saturday in the title game at Springfield, Mass.

A national title is big news in Bakersfield, a city of 250,000 best known as the hometown of four-time Indianapolis 500 winner Rick Mears.

"It's pretty impressive to have a team from Bakersfield because the people on the East Coast don't give the teams in Division II on the West Coast much credit," Mayor Bob Price said.

Price is planning a Wednesday rally at City Hall. He's got a band signed up and will present a proclamation honoring the team.

"We're gonna whoop and holler and yell," he said. The Roadrunners are the biggest game in this farming town about 100 miles north of Los Angeles. The Dodgers' Class A team plays in Bakersfield, but the university doesn't have a football team.

"Bakersfield is different from anywhere in the state as far as the support," coach Pat Douglass said Monday by telephone. "We were selling out our games. It was an incredible experience."

The Roadrunners play in a 3-year-old gym that seats 4,000. Just like big-time counterpart Bob Knight of Indiana, Douglass has his own TV show. And three local TV stations regularly cover the team. The local newspaper plans a 14-page spread this week on Bakersfield's championship season.

"We get more attention than UCLA does," Douglass said. "I mean, in Los Angeles there's the Lakers and other teams. I think we get too much attention sometimes."

However, it helps Douglass recruit players who otherwise believe a Division II program is beneath their talents.

"We get good players because of that," he said. "I've had some Division I offers, but I do have a good job. It would have to be something equally as good for me to leave."

Tyrone Davis scored 27 points against Troy State and was named the most valuable player of the Division II tournament. Troy State scored an NCAA single-game record 258 points this season.

"The team had scored 126 points the night before, and there was a lot of talk they were going to run us out of the gym," Douglass said. "We pretty much controlled the game from start to finish."

Bakersfield shut down Troy State's 3-point shooting. The Trojans set a tournament record for 3-pointers with 23 of 44 in the semifinals. Against Bakersfield, they were 5 for 23.

The Division II tournament is more grueling than the Division I tournament. Bakersfield played two games in two days to qualify for the eight-team competition this past weekend.



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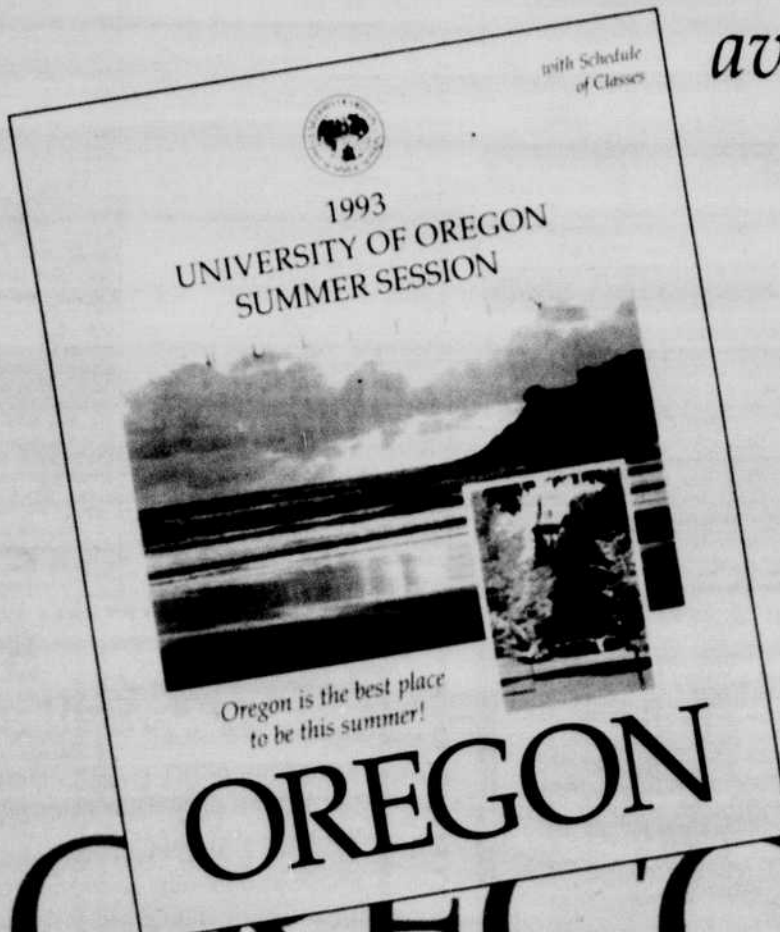


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