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## PORTLAND STATE SLIGHT FAVORITE OVER SACRAMENTO STATE

**Ogden, Utah** (January 24, 2013) - The Big Sky softball coaches have selected Portland State as a slight favorite over Sacramento State to win the 2013 softball championship. This is the first year that the Big Sky Conference has sponsored softball.

Coaches were not allowed to vote for their own team in the preseason poll, which was released Thursday by the league office.

Portland State received five first-place votes for a total of 34 points. After going 15-5 in the Pacific Coast Softball Conference last year, Portland State won the Mountain Division of the PCSC. Portland State returns Anna Bertrand, who was the unanimous PCSC Mountain Pitcher of the Year in 2012. Portland State beat Saint Mary's in the PCSC championship to earn the NCAA automatic berth. Portland State ended the 2012 season with a 28-25 record.

Sacramento State was picked to finish second with one first-place vote and 31 total points, just three points shy of first. The Hornets went 10-9 in the PCSC in 2012. Kathy Strahan is entering her 21st season as the Sacramento State head coach. The Hornets finished the 2012 season with a 27-19 record.

Southern Utah was chosen to finish third with one first-place vote and 23 points. In 2012, Southern Utah finished third in the Summit League with a 15-9 conference record and ended the season with a 29-25 record.

Northern Colorado was picked to finish fourth with 20 points. Northern Colorado finished the 2012 season tied for fifth overall with a 10-10 PCSC record. Head coach Shana Easley is entering her first season with the Bears.

Weber State finished fifth with 16 points. The Wildcats finished the 2012 season with a 10-10 PCSC conference record. Weber State will be returning seven letterwinners including four starting positional players.

North Dakota was picked sixth with 15 points. UND finished fourth in the Great West Conference with a 2-4 conference record and a 17-28 overall record.

Rounding out the poll is Idaho State, which was picked to finish seventh with eight points. The Bengals finished the 2012 season with a 7-13 PCSC record and are returning 11 letterwinners including five positional starters and three starting pitchers.

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The first regular season games start February 7, with the first conference games March 22. At the end of the conference season, the top four teams will advance to the Big Sky Championship, which will be hosted by the regular-season champion.

### **Preseason Softball Poll**

<b>Team</b>	<b>Points</b>
1. Portland State	34 (5)
2. Sacramento State	31 (1)
3. Southern Utah	23 (1)
4. Northern Colorado	20
5. Weber State	16
6. North Dakota	15
7. Idaho State	8

(Number of first place votes in parenthesis)