



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 23, 2017

USC tops pre-season collegiate sand poll

DiG Collegiate Sand Volleyball Pre-Season Poll

1. USC
2. UCLA
3. Florida State
4. Pepperdine
5. Hawaii
6. Arizona
7. Stetson
8. Georgia State
9. LSU
10. Long Beach State
11. Grand Canyon
12. Florida International
13. North Florida
14. Tulane
15. TCU
16. California
17. South Carolina
18. New Mexico
19. Florida Atlantic
20. Loyola Marymount

Others receiving votes:

Stanford, Cal Poly, St. Mary's, Pacific, Nebraska

SAN LUIS OBISPO — USC will begin its quest for a third straight national championship where it started and ended the 2016 season. At the very top. The Trojans are No. 1 in the DiG Magazine poll voted on by coaches and media, which is where they began last season. All eight teams that earned berths in last year's NCAA Beach Volleyball Championships are ranked in the poll's top 10. USC, however, remains the unanimous favorite to win a third consecutive national title when the sixth collegiate beach volleyball season begins next week.

USC is 62-2 the last two seasons, due in large part to the unblemished record of the No. 1 pair of Sara Hughes and Kelly Claes, who will bring a 73-match winning streak into the March 4 season opener against UCLA. Hughes has twice been named the DiG Magazine Player of the Year, while Claes was bestowed a similar honor by the American Volleyball Coaches Association last season.

Crosstown rival UCLA is No. 2 in the initial DiG Magazine poll after finishing the 2016 strong with a third-place national finish. The Bruins have an impressive No. 1 team in Nicole and Megan McNamara (the only team to win a set of Hughes and Claes in 2016). UCLA also bolstered the top of its lineup with reshirt freshman Torrey Van Winden, who reached the semifinals of the FIVB U21 World Championships last summer. Florida State, which had a remarkable run in 2016 and finished second to USC, begins the 2017 season at No. 3. The rest of the top 10 consists of Pepperdine (No. 4), Hawaii (No. 5), Arizona (No. 6), Stetson (No. 7), Georgia State (No. 8), LSU (No. 9) and Long Beach State (No. 10).

The next DiG poll will be released March 14.

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JDP Publishing • 1411 Marsh St., Suite 101 • San Luis Obispo, CA • 93401
tel: 805.541.9800 • fax: 805.541.9801 • web: digbeachvolleyball.com