TIGERS CELEBRATE A HOMECOMING

Pacific roared with excitement this spring as the Tigers announced a return to the sister institutions of the West Coast Conference.
Sixty years ago, University of the Pacific helped found the West Coast Conference (WCC), a conference that has since grown into a competitive force in intercollegiate athletics. During the seasons that followed, Pacific’s teams built a strong legacy and racked up an impressive record of achievements.

As Pacific becomes aligned again with the like-minded WCC schools, the Tigers are looking ahead to another chapter in their successful run.

BY LILY PENFOLD ’12

Throughout Pacific’s history, athletes have accomplished tremendous feats on the field and in the classroom. This year, the University embraced that past and set its sights toward future success — looking to break more records, win more championships and increase the excitement around athletics.

That happened on March 28 when Pacific announced that the Tigers will rejoin the West Coast Conference beginning in 2013.

For the WCC, that means more games, more competition and more excitement. For Pacific, it’s a homecoming.

“Pacific is proud to return to its roots,” said President Pamela A. Eibeck during a press conference announcing the move. “This is the perfect league for us. The WCC schools all have strong faith heritages and seek to bring about positive change in the world.”

The Tigers are ready to take on new competitors in the WCC and demonstrate their core values on and off the court, she said. (For more reflections from President Eibeck about this historic move, please see page 2.)

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— Nathan Davis ’02, former Pacific basketball player

Pacific Athletics boasts a RICH HERITAGE

Men’s basketball
Pacific is the only team to win the Big West championship in consecutive years. It has made eight NCAA tournament appearances, and is the only Big West Conference team since 1993 to advance to the second round of NCAA playoffs in consecutive seasons.

Olympic medal winners:
Swimmers Lance Larson ’66 (Gold and Silver, 1960), Ginnylee Roderick ’95 (Gold, 1984), Bradley Schumacher ’97, ’05 (2x Gold, 1996); volleyball players Elaina Oden ’90 (Bronze, 1992), Jennifer Joines ’03 (Silver, 2008).

Big West Player of the Year honorees:

Basketball player Michael Olowokandi, 1998 All-American and the number one overall NBA Draft pick that year.

Women’s volleyball
Pacific took the 1985 and 1986 NCAA National Championship and has advanced to 24 NCAA tournaments (including seven Final Fours).

Women’s Softball
has advanced to the NCAA tournament 12 times, capturing the 2011 Big West Conference title.
The West Coast Conference is an NCAA Division I conference offering 13 sports. It is made up of nine private, nonprofit colleges and universities, including basketball powerhouses Brigham Young, Gonzaga and Loyola Marymount, and longtime friendly rival Saint Mary’s. Pacific will be the 10th member of the WCC, with competition beginning in 2013–14.

Shared core values and a passion for student-centered education are distinct characteristics of WCC schools, Eibeck said.

“As an underclassman, I am excited that I will have the opportunity to compete in the WCC and challenge schools that have similar founding values regarding athletic and academic success,” says Hanna Levanen ’15, a Pacific women’s volleyball player. “It will definitely be special to bring back the long-lost rivalries with the like-minded and similar-sized Bay Area schools within this conference.”

Pacific was one of five founding members of the WCC in 1952–53, which was originally called the California Basketball Association. Pacific parted from the association in 1971, joining the Pacific Coast Athletic Association, which became the Big West Conference. Pacific has competed in that conference for 44 years.

“The WCC is a big-time conference, especially in the sport of men’s basketball,” says Nathan Davis ’02, former Pacific basketball player. “The WCC has a great track record of success with multiple teams advancing to NCAA postseason play each year. Pacific is ready to embrace the challenge of rising to the top.”

In the 2015–16 academic year, Pacific will add a men’s soccer team in order to better match the sports programs offered by the other WCC universities. Pacific has not offered a men’s soccer program since 1985. A women’s sport will also be added, though a decision has not yet been made as to what that sport will be.

“The momentum is high for Pacific as we move forward with the WCC. There are great opportunities ahead for Pacific’s athletics program,” says Ted Leland, vice president for External Relations and director of Intercollegiate Athletics.

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