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PORTLAND STATE PICKED NO .1 IN BIG SKY PRESEASON POLLS

OGDEN, Utah (October 22) - Portland State was picked, by the coaches and the media, to win the Big Sky title in 2009-10. It marks the first time the Vikings have been chosen to finish first in the preseason polls since joining the league in 1996-97. The polls were released on Thursday by the conference office and coaches were not allowed to vote for their own teams.

Portland State received seven first-place votes in the coaches poll for a total of 63 points. The media gave the Vikings 204 points and 15 first-place votes.

Sherrri Murrell and the Vikings are coming off their best season in school history. Portland State played in its first-ever championship game after earning a No. 2 seed to the Big Sky Tournament with a 14-2 conference and a 23-10 overall mark. Although the Vikings didn't win the championship, they did earn their first postseason berth to the Women's National Invitational Tournament. Portland State defeated Portland in the first round.

Portland State returns 12 letterwinners this season, which is the most in the history of the program. Three starters will also be back for the Vikings, including first team all-conference honoree Claire Faucher and honorable-mention selection Kelli Valentine. Faucher, a senior guard, has been a unanimous selection to the conference's first team the past two years. She also ranked sixth in the nation in assists per game last year with 8.84. Portland State lost four time all-conference selection, and the 2008-09 Defensive Player of the Year Kelsey Kahle to graduation.

The reigning champion Montana came in second with 56 points and two first-place votes in the coaches poll, and 201 points and nine first-place nods in the media poll. The last time that Montana wasn't favored in the preseason was in 1999, when Cal State Northridge was picked first. Montana has at least tied for the top spot in the coaches poll the past nine years.

In 2008 -09, the Grizzlies won their 19th regular season and 14th overall tournament titles. Montana advanced to the NCAA Tournament for the 19th time. Robin Selvig, who has been at the head of the women's basketball program for 31 years, led his squad to a 28-5 overall and 15-1 conference record. The Grizzlies return just two starters and have to replace three-time honorable mention All-American, and two-time conference MVP Mandy Morales.

Montana State has been picked to finish third in both polls for the second straight year. The coaches gave the Bobcats 50 total points and the media gave them 162. Montana State finished the 2008-09 regular-season in third place after going 15-15 overall and 8-8 in league play. Tricia Binford enters her fifth year at the helm of the program. She returns three starters, including first team all-conference selection Erica Perry and the 2008-09 Freshman of the Year Katie Bussey.

Weber State is predicted to finish fourth in this year's coaches poll with 30 points, and sixth in the media poll with 90 points. The Wildcats are one of only two teams in the conference that will have all five starters back heading into the 2009-10 season.

The coaches gave Idaho State 29 points for fifth place, while the media chose the Bengals to finish in fourth with 111 points. Northern Colorado earned 28 points to claim fifth place in the coaches poll and 66 points for eighth place in the media poll.

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Sacramento State was chosen to finish in fifth by the media with 108 points and eighth by the coaches with 22 points. The Hornets begin a new era in 2009-10, as former assistant coaches Jamie Craighead takes over the head coaching duties following the departure of Dan Muscatell in April.

Eastern Washington surpassed its predictions last year by jumping up two spots in both polls. The Eagles received 25 points from the coaches and 75 from the media to take seventh place. The Eagles also return all five starters from last year.

Northern Arizona rounded out the voting to finish in last place with 21 points from the coaches and 63 from the media.

The 2009-10 basketball season gets underway on November 13 and the conference season begins on December 31, 2009. The Big Sky Women's Basketball Tournament is slated for March 11-13 and will be hosted by the regular-season champion.

2009-10 BIG SKY WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PRESEASON POLLS

COACHES POLL			MEDIA POLL	
<u>Team</u>	<u>Points</u>		<u>Team</u>	<u>Points</u>
1. Portland State	63 (7)		1. Portland State	204 (15)
2. Montana	56 (2)		2. Montana	201 (9)
3. Montana State	50		3. Montana State	162
4. Weber State	30		4. Idaho State	111
5. Idaho State	29		5. Sacramento State	108
6. Northern Colorado	28		6. Weber State	90
7. Eastern Washington	25		7. Eastern Washington	75
8. Sacramento State	22		8. Northern Colorado	66
9. Northern Arizona	21		9. Northern Arizona	63

(First place votes in parenthesis)

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