

SEASON OUTLOOK

The road to the national championship looks bright for UCLA in 2005. Head Coach Al Scates, entering his 43rd season, returns a veteran team of 14 lettermen, four starters, and a deep bench. In addition, UCLA will host the NCAA Championships in Pauley Pavilion, where the Bruins boast a 24-0 record in the current four-team format. Nine of their 18 NCAA titles were captured on the Pauley hardwood.

In the preseason, UCLA won all five of its matches and looks to begin the season running on all cylinders.

"This is the best Fall we've ever had," said Scates. "I cannot remember our team having a better Fall camp.

"We're strong in the middle, we've got good outside hitters and setters, and our defense will be solid," he continued.

Following are capsule summaries of UCLA's personnel by position.

SETTER

Veteran **Dennis Gonzalez** is expected to return with 23 matches of experience to his credit. Academic difficulties kept him out of the lineup in the Fall and redshirt freshman **Julio "Gaby" Acevedo** snatched the starting job. Acevedo, in the preseason, did not lose a collegiate match in four starts.

"We will be very solid at the setting position with Gonzalez or Acevedo running the offense," said Scates.

A year in the program has improved all aspects of Acevedo's game, especially his strength and quickness. The former three-time Torrimar Volleyball Club All-American figures to start the preseason in a heated competition for this position.

Gonzalez, a junior, earned Third Team All-MPSF honors while recording 1,066 assists last season. He ranked fourth nationally with an average of 13.67 assists per game and guided the Bruins to a hitting percentage of .344, their best average in four years.

Backing up Acevedo and Gonzalez will be 6-7 junior **Aaron Dodd**, who has played in 10 games over two seasons. Junior **Beau Peters**, who played in 16 matches last season, is expected to redshirt the 2005 season.

OPPOSITE

At this position, the Bruins return another all-conference player in sophomore **Steve Klosterman**, who led the team in points and kills last season. The 6-7 Klosterman led the Bruins with 397 points (4.6 ppg) and 346 kills (3.8 kpg).

"Klosterman is even better this year," said Scates. "His serve is harder and faster than last year. His blocking is much improved, and he has improved his left side hitting."

In just his second match in a UCLA uniform, Klosterman pounded Cal State Northridge for 25.5 points, a career best. Last season, he led the team in kills and points 10 times and boasted eight matches of 20 or more kills.

Against UC Irvine in November 2004, he recorded a team-high of three aces in a three-game victory.

Redshirt junior **David Russell** returned to the team late in the Fall after redshirting last season and has been penciled in as Klosterman's backup. In two seasons, he has played in 28 matches and 59 games.

"David has a great vertical jump and hits well out of the back court," said Scates. "His experience and competitiveness will help our team."

The third opposite is expected to be redshirt sophomore **Matt McKinney**, who will be available in April when the basketball season finishes. As a freshman in 2003, McKinney started 14

matches and averaged nearly three kills per game. He sat out both the basketball and volleyball seasons last year because of a foot injury.



Steve Klosterman led the Bruins in points scored and total kills as a freshman last season.

OUTSIDE HITTER

Scates is thinking that fifth-year senior **Jonathan Acosta** can exceed the form he exhibited in 2003 when earned Third-Team All-MPSF honors. That season, he pounded 371 kills, hit .307 in 99 games and played the entire season virtually injury-free.

Last year, the 6-4 Acosta was ready to have a break-out season when he underwent an emergency appendectomy on Jan. 6 and yet another operation after that for complications. He did not return to full form until after the 2004 season.

"Jonathan's vertical jump has returned and he's improved his blocking. He's healthier than he's ever been," said Scates. "He'll have a great year."

Last year he saw time in just 12 matches, but managed to

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average 2.7 kpg.

Three-year letterman **Kris Kraushaar** enjoyed a fine season a year ago and is ready to return as one of the conference's top hitters. As a junior, he pounded 255 kills, hit .308 in 107 games and led the team with 35 aces. Kraushaar also recorded a career-high of 145 digs (1.3 dpg) and boasted 11 double-digit kill matches to rank second on the team.

"Kris is an outstanding passer," said Scates. "His digging skills have improved. He will make sure our defense is solid."

Combined, Acosta and Kraushaar boast 348 games of experience.

Waiting to step in at either outside hitter position is 6-5 junior **Damien Scott**, a multi-talented player who could excel for any team in the league. In eight games in the Fall, Scott's .536 hitting percentage led the team. Against UC Irvine in November, he came off the bench in Game 3 and slammed eight kills in eight attempts.

"He is explosive, quick and he passes well," said Scates. "He's got a great serve, too."

In 15 matches last season, he recorded five aces which would have ranked him among the national leaders, if not for the required statistical minimums. In one match against CS Northridge, he hammered 11 kills (.588).

Other backups at this position include senior **Gray Garrett**, who has 41 career matches of experience and third-year sophomore **Paul George**.

QUICK HITTER

Senior **Paul Johnson** earned Third-Team All-MPSF honors last year after tying for 11th nationally in hitting percentage at .443. He also led the team in blocking at 1.0 bpg and ranked second in service aces.

"Paul's blocking and hitting have improved over the last year," said Scates. "He's also developed a lot of different serves, and will be scoring a lot of points for us. He'll have a great senior year."

Johnson was the team's second-leading scorer last season, recording 377 points for an average of 3.7 points per game. His 283 kills and 2.8 kpg average also ranked second to Klosterman.

Senior **Allan Vince** returns to the middle this season and is expected to contribute immediately.

"Allan will be one of the top blockers in the league," said Scates. "He gets to the attacker quickly, and he works hard to be available to the setter in transition."

Vince has played mostly as an opposite during his career and enjoyed a 27-kill performance against Pepperdine two years ago. Playing the quick hitter's position in the Fall, he recorded 17 total blocks (1.2 bpg) to lead the team. He also added 27 kills and hit .400.

Scates says fourth-year junior **Nick Scheftic** is the team's most improved player and will serve as the first quick hitter off the bench. At 6-11, Scheftic stuffs many balls and this intimidates the hitters into making mistakes.

"Nick is hitting the ball from high above the net," said Scates. "His blocking and serving have improved and he will see plenty of action this season."

In the Fall, Scheftic recorded 20 kills, six blocks, and hit .531 in just eight games. Last season in nine games, he recorded 10 total blocks (1.1 bpg) and 12 kills (1.3 kpg).

Also expected to provide depth in the middle is 6-7 redshirt

freshman **Mark Lovein**, a former All-CIF and All-Empire League standout from Yorba Linda Esperanza High.

LIBERO

Two-time AVCA First-Team All-American Adam Shrader, the Bruins' all-time career digs leader, has graduated, leaving a huge vacancy in the Bruins' passing game.

Enter highly-touted freshman **Tony Ker**, a five-time Junior Olympics All-American. Ker earned eight varsity letters at Valencia High and was pointed toward UCLA by former assistant coach Mark Knudsen, who now serves as the Vikings' boys' volleyball coach.

"Tony will be a National Team player," said Scates. "He can run balls down, he's a great defensive player and he's very quick. He has earned the starting position."

In the Bruins' final Fall match against UC Irvine, Ker coolly recorded 14 digs in just three games. For the Fall schedule, he recorded 30 digs in 11 games (2.7 dpg).

Redshirt freshman **Eric Chaghouri**, a member of Loyola High's 2003 CIF championship team, moved into the backup role late in the Fall.



Paul Johnson (l) led the Bruins in blocking last season