

SPORTS



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Viva las Vandals

Freshman steals senior night



Zach Edwards | Argonaut

Idaho guard Stacey Barr takes a shot from inside the key at Saturday's game in Cowan Spectrum. The Vandals beat Hawaii 69-50 in the final home game of the season. Idaho will be in Las Vegas for the WAC Tournament March 7 to 10.

Idaho women's basketball beats Hawaii, freshman Stacey Barr scores 23

Kevin Bingaman
Argonaut

It might have been senior night, but a freshman stole the show. Freshman Stacey Barr's career-high 23 points propelled the Vandals to a 69-50 senior day victory against Hawaii Saturday in Cowan Spectrum. With the win, Idaho clinched the No. 4 seed in the WAC tournament March 8 to 12 at the Orleans Arena in Las Vegas.

Seniors Keri Arendse, Adrie Shiels and Ganeaya Rogers were honored before the game and walked out of Cowan Spectrum for the last time with a win. Arendse said it is an ideal way to go out.

"Amazing," Arendse said. "Our whole team came out tonight and played their hearts out. It's awesome."

Coming into the week the Vandals were No. 6 in the WAC and had to win both remaining games — combined with two losses from Hawaii or San Jose State — to advance higher in

the standings. Idaho got what it needed and enters the tournament as the No. 4 seed to play San Jose State. The Vandals beat the Spartans in both meetings this season.

Idaho coach Jon Newlee said he is thrilled with the way his team performed at the end of the regular season.

"We knew how important these last two games at home were going to be coming into it and what we had to get done," Newlee said. "I'm so proud of our players coming and bringing it."

The game began with four lead changes and four ties, but the Vandals had other plans. Halfway through the half the Vandals went on a 27-2 run sparked by four-straight 3-point makes from Barr. Defensively, Idaho held the Rainbow Wahine to four points in the last seven minutes of the half and took a 46-21 lead

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Idaho wins finale, clinches No. 3 seed

Theo Lawson
Argonaut

The Idaho men's basketball team concluded its roller coaster of a regular season on a positive note, handling San Jose State 70-64 Saturday at The Event Center in San Jose.

Idaho already held at least a No. 3 seed in Thursday's WAC tournament and almost had the No. 2 seed locked when Fresno State held a 16-point lead over New Mexico State. However, the Aggies managed a late comeback and an overtime win, meaning the No. 3 Vandals will meet No. 6 Hawaii at 12 p.m. Thursday at the Orleans Arena in Las Vegas.

In four contests prior to Saturday's between Idaho and San Jose State, the team leading at halftime wound up losing, but the Vandals' indecisive one-point advantage going into the locker room was not a precursor of things to come.

"Great ball game, great road trip and (the way) this team played in the months of February and March — oh my goodness. I couldn't be prouder of this team," Idaho coach Don Verlin said. "To sweep this road trip in the circumstances and the pressure our team was under, what a great thing for our basketball program."

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Men's first round WAC predictions

No. 1 Nevada vs. No. 8 San Jose State

The Wolf Pack's only flaw this WAC season came against Idaho in early February, but Nevada has been near perfect and travels to Las Vegas with a five-game conference win streak under its belt. Deonte Burton and Malik Story are the WAC's most lethal combination, but Olek Czyz and Dario Hunt aren't to be overlooked. In addition, the Wolf Pack look to have the home crowd on their side, not to mention San Jose State's only consistent threat has been junior James Kinney. Last year's Spartans pulled an upset of Idaho in the second round but did it with Adrian Oliver, one of the nation's leading scorers.

Edge: Nevada

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Theo Lawson
Argonaut

Women's first round WAC predictions

No. 1 Fresno State vs. No. 8 New Mexico State

The Fresno State Bulldogs dominated the conference season, boasting a 13-1 WAC record. Their opponent, New Mexico State, has struggled all year and won three conference games. The Bulldogs defeated New Mexico State in both meetings this year, most recently Saturday, when they beat the Aggies 79-43. There's no reason to think this meeting will be any different.

Edge: Fresno State

No. 2 Utah State vs. No. 7 Nevada

Utah State claimed its first 20-win regular season Saturday when it beat San Jose State. The Aggies have been solid all season, amassing an 11-3 WAC record. Nevada has had its share of struggles this season, but managed to finish the season on a two-game win streak to climb out of last place. Nevada has the potential to be a party crasher, but it's not likely against Utah State's offensive

firepower.

Edge: Utah State

No. 3 La. Tech vs. No. 6 Hawaii

La. Tech hasn't been its usual powerhouse this season, but is good enough to make an impact in the first round. The Lady Techsters finished the season with an 8-6 conference record. Hawaii looked like it had a No. 4 or No. 5 seed locked up, but lost its last two games and fell back to No. 7. This game could go either way. The

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Kevin Bingaman
Argonaut

Our all-WAC team

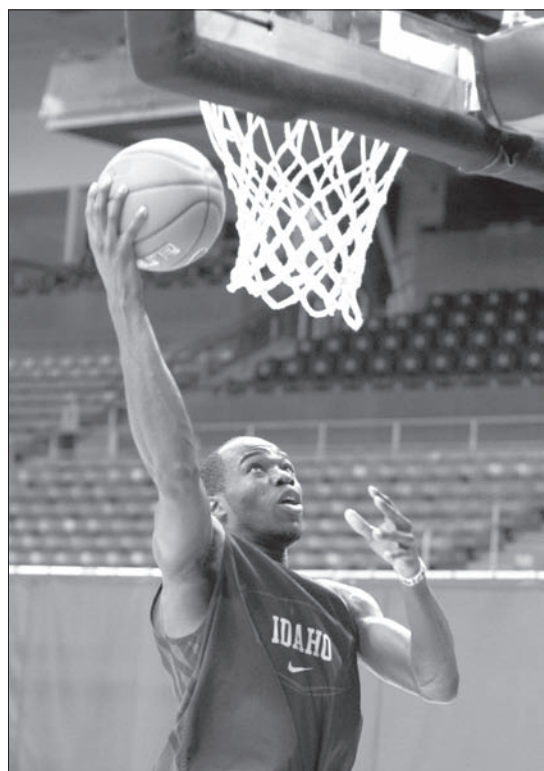
Check out who we would have picked for the all-WAC honors.

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Scouting report

Watch our scouting report relating to the WAC Tournament.

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Zach Edwards | Argonaut

Idaho forward Djim Bandomel dunks the ball at practice Monday in Cowan Spectrum. Idaho will be in Las Vegas March 8 to 10 for the WAC Tournament at the Orleans Arena in Las Vegas.

NO. 3
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The first half consisted of traded baskets and nine lead changes that never exceeded five points.

Whether it was the opportunity to clinch a No. 2 seed or the motivation to acquire extra momentum heading into this week's conference tournament, the Vandals busted out of the gates in the second half with an 8-0 run. Idaho never trailed in the second and led by as many as 14. Freshman Connor Hill was a 3-point machine and knocked down four consecutive from downtown—three in less than five minutes.

"I just caught the flame there in the second half and it just seemed like the basket was big and everything I was putting up was dropping. It was a good feeling," Hill said.

The Post Falls native's long-range finesse was much-needed, especially after a first half that saw the Vandals go just 1-7 from beyond the arc. Led by Hill, Idaho was 5-7 from 3-point range in the second half.

Idaho's free throw shooting proved to be its Achilles heel down the stretch, which the Spartans used to cut the Vandal lead to four with four minutes remaining. Four Vandals made 10 of their next 11 from the charity stripe and though the free throw game continued, the Spartan comeback didn't.

Hill, who came off the bench to log just 13 minutes, became the team's No. 2 scorer with 12 points, off a 4-5 3-point shooting performance.

Senior Deremy Geiger penetrated the Spartan defense on multiple occasions and learned that he would earn more points driving the lane, rather than posting up at the perimeter. Geiger was just 1-3 from the perimeter but led the Vandals with 16 points.

The Vandals allowed James Kinney a game-high 19 points, but held senior Wil Carter to 6-18 from the field and just 12 points, thanks in large part to Kyle Barone's dominating defensive presence. Barone posted nine points in the contest but the junior grabbed nine boards, dished out four assists and added three blocks.

"Kyle is playing great right now, especially on the defensive end," Hill said. "He's blocking people, he's rebounding the ball extremely well, he's scoring it in the post, he's doing it all right now and he's a great leader."

As a team, the Vandals finished with 20 fewer shots than the Spartans but were efficient from the field, shooting 53 percent while San Jose State shot just less than 40 percent.

Verlin hopes the momentum that propelled the team through February will translate this week's tournament and match-up against Hawaii.

"Now it's time to play," Verlin said. "I'm pretty confident we'll get to play after the tournament somewhere and like I told our guys, 'let's make sure it's the NCAA Tournament.' That's the good thing about our league — there's an automatic bid up for grabs."

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WOMEN'S
FROM PAGE 8

Rainbow Wahine swept the Techsters this season and considering La. Tech ended the season on a losing note, an upset is probable.

Edge: Hawaii

No. 4 Idaho vs. No. 5 San Jose State

After a dismal start to the season the Vandals came alive, winning six of the last nine games of the season, including their last two to boost them from a No. 6 to No. 4 seed. San Jose State had its best season in years with a conference record of 6-8 and has one of the top scorers in the league, Brittany Johnson. The Vandals swept the Spartans in two close games. Either team could take this win, but the Vandals carry momentum after finishing the season with two wins while the Spartans lost their last two.

Edge: Idaho

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MEN'S
FROM PAGE 8

No. 2 New Mexico State vs. No. 7 Fresno State

Though the Bulldogs have picked up just three conference wins this season, they have challenged the WAC's best on multiple occasions. Fresno State knocked out Idaho at home, took Nevada to triple overtime and led New Mexico State by as many as 16 before falling in overtime during the teams' regular-season finale. Senior forward Wendell McKines, the conference's leading scorer and rebounder, is the primary reason the Aggies will be the No. 2 seed and most likely to compete with Nevada in the championship.

Edge: New Mexico State

No. 3 Idaho vs. No. 6 Hawaii

With Zane Johnson and Vander Joaquim, the Warriors challenge anybody in the conference but for whatever reason they've lost the last five by a combined 77 points. During their skid, the Warriors suffered an 82-63 home loss to Idaho, in which the Vandals all but swept the hosts off their feet. Idaho has beaten every team in the conference at least

once and is heating up at the right time. With five starters who each have the ability to put up double-digits, the Vandals are multidimensional to say the least.

Edge: Idaho

No. 4 Utah State vs. No. 5 La. Tech

It is hard to remember the last time anyone would have said a team besides Utah State would win the conference tournament and roll into March Madness, but injury and the loss of significant seniors hampered the Aggies all season. Nevertheless, they have enough experience in the WAC tournament and talent to pull off a few upsets and find their way to the Big Dance again — not to mention they defeated La Tech twice this season. The Bulldogs are hot though, and have been the streakiest team in the WAC this season. Before falling to Nevada in the season finale, La. Tech won five straight. Experience and coaching trumps momentum, though, at this point in the season.

Edge: Utah State

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SENIOR
FROM PAGE 8

into the locker room, matching the team's season-high for points in a half. Barr finished the half with 16.

"To see her (Barr) come out and light it up like that gets everyone jacked up," Newlee said. "She plays hard and that's what I love about her. She just plays hard at both ends."

The Rainbow Wahine didn't go down easily in the second half. Hawaii started the half on a 9-0 run and continued to gain ground as the clock ticked down. Hawaii got as close as 15, but toward the end, Idaho clamped down and coasted to victory.

Newlee said his team wasn't as focused in the second as it was in the first, but was happy with the way

it ended the game.

"At this level you have to play hard every minute and I think we lost our focus and intensity during those runs, but I thought we were able to ride the ship," Newlee said. "We talked about it a little bit in some of those timeouts that we have to get it together, that we have to play hard and it was a long way from over."

Barr led all scorers with 23 points, sophomore Alyssa Charlston checked in with 15 and freshman Krissy Karr rounded out the Vandals in double figures with 13. Idaho made a season-high 11 3-pointers in the game.

After a season-low six turnovers Thursday, the Vandals continued to protect the ball with only 11 turnovers against Hawaii.

Newlee said his team's

defensive performance was the key to its win.

"It was our defense and our rebounding," Newlee said. "... It was one and done for them and then for us to execute as well as we did offensively, that's where that lead just ballooned in the first half."

The next stop for Idaho is Las Vegas for the WAC tournament where it faces San Jose State in the first round. The game is at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Barr said the team is confident.

"It's been great to come off two wins in a row," Barr said. "It's really going to help us get momentum going into the tournament and hopefully we can continue."

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