



TOURNAMENT FIELD

Auburn	SEC
BYU	WCC
Nebraska	Big Ten
Oklahoma	Big 12
Washington	Pac-12

SCHEDULE

Thursday, February 9

Nebraska vs. BYU, 10 a.m. 

Auburn vs. Oklahoma, 1 p.m. 

BYU vs. Oklahoma, 4 p.m.

Washington vs. Auburn, 7 p.m. 

Friday, February 10

Oklahoma vs. Nebraska, 11 a.m.

Auburn vs. Nebraska, 2 p.m.

Washington vs. BYU, 7 p.m.

Saturday, February 11

BYU vs. Auburn, 10 a.m.

Nebraska vs. Washington, 12:45 p.m.

Oklahoma vs. Washington, 3:30 p.m.

**All times listed in local CT*

Games played at Nancy Almaraz Stadium

PV College Challenge

Session 1 of the Puerto Vallarta College Challenge will feature matchups you would never expect to see in February – but this is no ordinary season-opening tournament setting. The event will start with four games on Feb. 9, three of which will be televised on the ESPN family of networks.

Nebraska and BYU (which played in the inaugural Puerto Vallarta event in 2015) launch the schedule (ESPN3, 10 a.m. CT). That game is followed by an eye-opening rematch between NCAA defending champion Oklahoma and runner-up Auburn (ESPNU), who tangled in three memorable games last June at the Women’s College World Series. The final TV game on Feb. 9 again features Auburn, as the Tigers face Washington (ESPN3).

Each team in Session 1 will play four games at the event; the schedule wraps up Feb. 11 with Oklahoma taking on Washington at 3:30 p.m. CT.

Three teams (Oklahoma, Auburn, Washington) were Top 10 programs in last year’s RPI standings after the regular season; Nebraska (No. 34) and BYU (No. 50) also had very strong campaigns and are expected to move up that list in 2017.

Event History

The inaugural Puerto Vallarta College Challenge was held in 2015, featuring the teams from BYU, Nevada, Northern Colorado and Southern Illinois. Those were the first fastpitch games in NCAA history played outside the United States.

As word spread about this unique softball setting, Triple Crown Sports and city officials at Puerto Vallarta agreed in to pool resources and improve almost every aspect of Nancy Almaraz Stadium, site of the event. While the tournament was not held in 2016, there was enough time to complete the work on the stadium, as well as contact more D-I fastpitch programs to build a dynamic 10-team field for 2017.

With its February placement, the Puerto Vallarta College Challenge offers programs a warm-weather setting to help launch their spring schedules, while also giving fans a chance to follow their favorite teams while enjoying a memorable oceanside resort retreat and vacation.

School	2016 Record	Letterwinners R/L	Starters R/L	Head Coach (Record / Year)	Postseason
Auburn	58-12	16/8	6/3	Clint Myers (1,066-187-1 / 21st)	NCAA Runner-Up
BYU	36-21	14/2	9/2	Gordon Eakin (559-258 / 15th)	NCAA Regional
Nebraska	35-21	14/5	6/4	Rhonda Revelle (913-485 / 25th)	NCAA Regional
Oklahoma	57-8	11/8	10/2	Patty Gasso (1,246-372-3 / 27th)	National Champions
Washington	39-15	15/5	10/4	Heather Tarr (482-211-1 / 13th)	NCAA Super Regionals

AUBURN

The Tigers won 58 games last year, churning into the Women's College World Series final against Oklahoma and just coming up short, losing the deciding Game 3 by a 2-1 score. Auburn will tackle 2017 with a young team, featuring just four seniors and only one with significant experience, but six starters are back. Head coach Clint Myers is entering his fourth year at Auburn; he's averaging 52 victories per season.



That key senior, infielder Kasey Cooper, is a 5-foot-4 force of nature – she hit .422 with 21 home runs and 83 RBI, earning the Southeast Conference and ESPNw player of the year awards. Barring injury, she should end up in the NCAA top 25 for career home runs. Junior outfielder Victoria Draper will also be leaned upon after starting 69 games and hitting .325 last year.

There's plenty of talent in the circle as junior pitcher Kaylee Carlson is back after going 19-2 last year with a 2.36 ERA; also prepared to knock out innings is sophomore Makayla Martin, who was 15-4 last year, posting a 1.57 ERA and holding hitters to a .215 batting average.

NOTE: Auburn signed eight players in its November recruiting class, a group ranked No. 2 overall in the nation. Four players were stalwarts in the Birmingham Bolts club program in Alabama; two others played for the OC Batbusters in southern California.

BYU

The Cougars are rightly hungry to get to work in 2017, with nine returning starters and just two lettermen having graduated from last year's 36-21 team. BYU was 12-3 in the West Coast Conference and made the NCAA Tournament, heading home after losses to Missouri and Nebraska.



The team's top three hitters are back – senior Ashley Thompson (.400, 44 runs and 12 stolen bases), senior Lauren Bell (.373, WCC defensive player of the year at shortstop) and junior Alexa Strid (.328, all WCC first team). And sitting back ready to drive home all those baserunners is sophomore catcher Libby Sugg, whose dynamite freshman year included team-high totals of 18 home runs and 58 RBI.

More optimism for a postseason run comes from the pitching prowess of senior McKenna Bull, who was 27-13 last year with a solid 2.63 ERA. The WCC pitcher of the year had 10 shutouts. Head coach Gordon Eakin is entering his 15th year at BYU and has been named his conference's coach of the year seven times.

NOTE: There are four pitchers on the roster looking to take some of the burden off Bull, as well as position themselves to take over after this year. Two of those pitchers are sisters – junior Arianna Paulson and freshman Arissa Paulson.

NEBRASKA

The Cornhuskers were a little streaky last year, closing with a 35-21 record and just 13-9 in the Big Ten, but the roster did enough good things to reach the NCAA Tournament. Head coach Rhonda Revelle simply understands how to keep her team in the mix – she's earned coach of the year honors in three major conferences and has 20 NCAA Tournament appearances on her resume.



Setting the tone in uniform is senior infielder MJ Knighten, who is a two-time all-NFCA and Big Ten first team selection. She hit .376 last year (with an imposing .509 on-base percentage) and clubbed 21 home runs with 60 RBI. Another potent bat rests in the hands of junior infielder Laura Barrow, who hit .295 and started 52 games.

Senior pitcher Cassie McClure handled multiple roles; she was one of 12 pitchers nationally with 15 wins and five saves. Kaylan Jablonski had 18 starts as a sophomore, winning eight games. Two juniors – Taylor Kadavy and Caitlin Bartsch – saw very limited action in the circle last year but could be asked to do more in 2017.

NOTE: The Cornhuskers had the unusual experience of getting three pitchers to toss more than 100 innings in a season. McClure threw 156.1 innings, Jablonski tossed 106.1, and Emily Lockman (10-5 overall) threw 104.1 innings.

OKLAHOMA

Understand this about the Sooners – they won the 2016 NCAA championship, are returning 10 players with notable starting experience, and they only have one senior on the roster for 2017. That means youth dominates the roster, and Oklahoma is expected to be in the national mix for a while.



The Sooners were 57-8 last year, 17-1 in the Big 12, winning 30 straight games at one point and slipping past Auburn in a three-game thriller in Oklahoma City to claim the title – it's the third one in OU history and the second in four years under head coach Patty Gasso. She has a .776 winning percentage and more than 1,000 wins in her 22 seasons in Norman.

A product of the national club powerhouse Corona Angels, sophomore Shay Knighten is back after a terrific debut, where she hit .397 with 13 home runs and 62 RBI. Junior Kelsey Arnold started all 65 games for OU, hitting .382 and stealing 15 bases, and sophomore Fale Aviu came through with a .355 batting average to go with eight home runs and 50 RBI.

Junior pitcher Paige Parker survived and even thrived under the pressure, going 38-3 with a 1.64 ERA, notching 269 strikeouts in 252.1 innings and limiting opponents to a .194 batting average.

NOTE: There were 174 innings not pitched by Parker last year, and none of those hurlers are on the 2017 roster. But the Sooners landed a key transfer from Missouri, Paige Lowary, who was sidelined for portions of 2016 after getting hit in the head with a line drive. She bounced back to finish 25-8 for the Tigers.

WASHINGTON

The Huskies will bring back 10 starters with notable experience from last year, when the team went 39-15 overall and reached the NCAA Super Regionals before being defeated by Alabama. The 2017 season will perhaps bring some extra urgency – if Washington misses out on the WCWS, it'll mark the longest drought from the event for the team since the early 1990s.



Coach Heather Tarr enters her 13th year with depth in every portion of the lineup. Junior outfielder Trysten Melhart led the team with her .378 batting average, stealing eight bases and committing just one error in 48 starts. Ali Aguilar is the focal point of the lineup – the infielder hit .365 last year with 21 home runs and 70 RBI, scoring 76 runs and owning an on-base percentage of .488. Taylor Van Zee also knows how to get on base, as she hit .369 in 2016.

The pitching needs for the Huskies will likely be met in the same fashion as last season. Sophomore Taran Alvelo was 18-7 with a 3.16 ERA in her debut, striking out about one batter per inning; she'll work alongside Madi Schreyer, a junior who was 13-4 a year ago with a 3.52 ERA.

NOTE: Although UW is tucked up in the Northwest corner of the nation, the softball roster is recognized. Aguilar was named to the USA Women's National Softball team as one of 20 players; meanwhile, incoming freshman Sis Bates earned a spot on the USA Women's Junior National Softball roster.



PAST RESULTS - 2015

February 26

Northern Colorado 10, Southern Illinois 10
BYU 7, Nevada 5

February 27

BYU 5, Northern Colorado 4
Northern Colorado 2, Nevada 1
BYU 8, Southern Illinois 0
Southern Illinois 6, Nevada 5

February 28

Nevada 23, Southern Illinois 9
BYU 8, Southern Illinois 1
Northern Colorado 6, Nevada 4

TOURNAMENT FIELD - 2015

BYU (West Coast)
Nevada (Mountain West)
Northern Colorado (Big Sky)
Southern Illinois (Missouri Valley)

TOURNAMENT FIELD - 2017

Session #1

Auburn (SEC)
BYU (West Coast)
Nebraska (Big Ten)
Oklahoma (Big 12)
Washington (Pac-12)

Session #2

Cal State Fullerton (Big West)
Florida Gulf Coast (Atlantic Sun)
Fresno State (Mountain West)
Mississippi State (SEC)
Texas Tech (Big 12)

SINGLE GAME RECORDS

TEAM

Most Runs (Game): 23 - Nevada (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Runs (Inning): 11 - Nevada (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Hits: 20 - Nevada (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Doubles: 4 - Northern Colorado (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015); Nevada (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Triples: 1 - BYU (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015); Northern Colorado (vs. Nevada, 2015)
Most Home Runs: 2 - BYU (vs. Northern Colorado, 2015); Nevada (vs. SIU, 2015); BYU (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Stolen Bases: 5 - BYU (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Walks Drawn: 9 - Northern Colorado (vs. BYU, 2015); Nevada (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Longest Game: 8 innings / 2:45 (Northern Colorado vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)

INDIVIDUAL

Most Runs: 5 - Danielle Wiltz, Nevada (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Hits: 4 - Melissa Marcovecchio, Northern Colorado (vs. Southern Illinois); Mercedes O'Connor, BYU (vs. Southern Illinois); Karley Hopkins, Danielle Wiltz, Amanda Weis, Nevada (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Doubles: 2 - Nicole Hudson, Northern Colorado (vs. Southern Illinois); Amanda Weis, Nevada (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015); Merri Anne Patterson, Southern Illinois (vs. Northern Colorado, 2015)
Most Triples: 1 - Gordy Bravo, BYU (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015); Melissa Marcovecchio, Northern Colorado (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Home Runs: 2 - Mercedes O'Connor, BYU (vs. Northern Colorado, 2015)
Most Stolen Bases: 3 - Lacey Hofstedt, BYU (vs. Nevada, 2015)
Most RBI: 6 - Amanda Weis, Nevada (vs. Southern Illinois, 2015)
Most Strikeouts by a Pitcher: 8 - Katie Bertelsen, Southern Illinois (vs. Northern Colorado); McKenna Isenberg, Nevada (vs. Northern Colorado, 2015)

RECORDS BY SCHOOL

School	Record
BYU	4-0
Northern Colorado	2-1-1
Nevada	1-4
Southern Illinois	1-3-1

RECORDS BY CONFERENCE

Conference	Record
West Coast	4-0
Big Sky	2-1-1
Mountain West	1-4
Missouri Valley	1-3-1

About Triple Crown Sports

Based in Fort Collins, CO., Triple Crown Sports has been producing events in youth athletics and the college ranks for more than 30 years. TCS runs both the preseason and postseason WNIT basketball events and produces the men's and women's Cancun Challenge tournaments in November, which have been recognized by Sports Illustrated as a top-5 destination tournament for D-I basketball programs. TCS fastpitch tournaments (including the 1,000-team Sparkler/Fireworks event) draw the nation's finest club programs, and hundreds of college coaches attend TCS events for recruiting purposes.