By Kerri Holden


Voting for student leaders in the future could be as easy as registering for classes or checking e-mail.

The Associated Students Inc. Elections Committee is researching the feasibility of online voting as one way to increase voter turnout.

Only 7.5 percent of students voted in last April's ASI election.

Committee Chairwoman Leslie Mottitt said several universities across the United States have ditched their voter turnout by implementing online voting.

Western Illinois University Trustee Jim Phillips said voting there has increased slightly every year since its initial jump of 82 percent during the first year of online voting.

"Any feedback we've had from students has been positive," Phillips said. "Even when we did away completely with paper ballots there weren't any gripes or groans."

Mottitt said she thinks students would welcome the new system of voting because they can cast their electronic ballot anywhere they find an Internet connection.

"You wouldn't have to stand in line as you currently have to," Mottitt said. "You could just walk up, log in, and leave."

Voting online would also be more convenient for those who oversee the system, Mottitt said.

The hours of manually tallying votes would be replaced by the press of a button.

The system would most likely be similar to POWER at Mustanglnto, Mottitt said.

Students would need to enter their student identification number and personal identification number to be connected to a secure page with the candidates' names.

Mottitt said she thinks security will not be a big issue.

"Most students are comfortable already with the security provided by the registration and student information systems and voting would be modeled after those," she said.

If anyone felt uncomfortable giving their numbers online, paper ballots may still be an option, Mottitt said.

The main concern Elections Committee adviser Bob Walters has is that the ease of online voting could encourage uninformed people to vote.

"I'm more concerned about having an uninformed voter," said Walters.

see VOTING, page 2

First Day of Service honors King legacy

By Melissa McFarland

Crayons, trees, murals and children were the ingredients for Cal Poly's first Day of Service in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Saturday.

Day of Service was a joint effort between Cal Poly's Multicultural Center and Student Community Services (SCS). About 40 student volunteers came out to help with projects: mural painting with children and tree planting at the sewage plant.

Patricia Prince, the Multicultural Center coordinator, said a quote from King himself to describe the day's goal: "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualism to the broader concerns of all humanity."

"Martin Luther King was all about service," Prince said.

"That quote talks about how we don't really reach our full potential until we serve our community."

According to SCS, 20 students met about 42 children at the Housing Authority to paint murals, plant trees and celebrate his message.

Every kids made 30 or more hand fulls of pens, crayons and seemingly endless glitter, but the end result was something to be proud of.

The students helped children create scenes of King with children and at the pulpit, along with phrases they thought described him, like "freedom," "peace," and "justice."

"Artwork is able to express some of the things he did," said Murray of 2000.

see SERVICE, page 2

Doctors, victims face physical scars of domestic violence

By Amy Lovell

An innovative program to address the physical aftermath of domestic violence was introduced to San Luis Obispo residents in the Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center Auditorium Wednesday.

Dr. Roman Bukachevsky introduced the program, called the Face to Face program.

"Physicians need to heighten their awareness of patients who may be suffering from domestic violence," Bukachevsky said.

Face to Face provides free plastic and reconstructive surgery to domestic violence victims who suffer injuries to the head, neck and face.

The patients must be out of the violent situation for at least a year.

"It takes therapy to heal on the inside, but it takes a physician to heal on the outside," said Delores Winje, a local business owner who survived a shotgun blast to her face.

Marianne Kennedy, executive director of San Luis Obispo's Center for Alternatives to Domestic Violence, said a woman is abused by her partner every 13 seconds in the United States. One of every two women will suffer domestic violence sometime in her lives.

"That's an alarming statistic if it's correct," speech communication student Alan Jam said.

Bukachevsky, a plastic surgeon with offices in San Luis Obispo and Templeton, said, "It takes community involvement to address domestic violence issues."

The American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPS), together with the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, founded the National Domestic Violence Project of which Bukachevsky is a member.

The organization has 275 plastic surgeons in 43 states enrolled in its program.

According to AAFPS literature, the goal is to eliminate painful memories of the abuse.

"When I walk down the street, people won't look at me all the time, and my children's friends won't ask what happened to their mom's face," Winje said of what Bukachevsky would do for her.

"I went in and the plastic surgeon who treated me was a friend. I was so embarrassed, but he put me back together," Winje said.

Bukachevsky told Winje that the former approach of taking bone from the hip and using it to fill a metal plate has been dramatically improved.

"In the new procedure, the physician takes bone from the leg or stomach area and attaches it to living tissue in the jaw, and it lives," Bukachevsky said.

"Linda," whose name has been changed to protect her safety, already had surgery to fix her broken nose.

Linda was also attacked in 1985 by an older man who courted her in high school.

see VIOLENCE, page 2

Mechanical engineering senior Alexander McKay paints a child's face at the Housing Authority Saturday during Cal Poly's First Day of Service in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. About 40 student volunteers came out to help with two projects: mural painting with children and tree planting at the sewage plant.
SERVICE
continued from page 1

during his life," SCS adviser Season Conlan said. "Other than preaching to the kids, having them color and see his actions helps them learn."

Adam Lee, a civil engineering student, said that despite the chaos of 40 children and 20 students running around, King's message was clearly present.

"It's just great seeing all these kids from different cultures and ethnicities playing together," Lee said.

King's message didn't seem lost in the student body.

"I learned that people aren't different from each other and everyone should get along," McGee said. "He didn't want us to think that white people were better than black people, or that black people are better than white people, because everyone's the same."

The idea for the mural painting came from Conlan, and she hopes the service program will become an annual tradition.

"Student Community Services serves every week, but we wanted to purposely do it on a day that would really celebrate (King's) contribution to society," Conlan said.

While murals were being painted, trees were being planted at the sewage treatment center several blocks away.

Mark Skinner, the stewardship director of the county Land Conservancy, took charge of the Redwood-planting group of about 20 students. The trees were planted to line a walkway and trail, which might one day connect to the City-to-Sea Greenway. That greenway leads all the way to Avila Beach.

"They have their work cut out for them because we have to start from scratch," Skinner said prior to planting.

"We have to use grazed to seed- proof the trees, and these aren't small trees. These things are in 15-gallon containers."

Despite the challenge, the students came through, accomplishing more than Skinner expected. Twenty-two of the 25 trees were successfully planted, and the remaining five were left for another group the following day.

VIOLENCE
continued from page 1

school.

"It started with flowers, candy and gifts," Linda said. "My friends and I thought it was cool at first."

However, Linda couldn't get rid of him. He stalked her and violated her parents' home.

One day, while Linda's mother was giving her father a ride to work, she was broken into her house and chased her friend upstairs with a knife. She hit her friend in the face until the friend fell over a dresser.

While murals broke into her house and chased her, Linda said, "Cir job is to make sure that their house on fire," Linda said. "After the incident with me, he killed a woman who looked like me."

Karen Coffey, an advocate for the Victim Witness Program in the San Luis Obispo district attorney's office, said, "Our job is to make sure that victims and witnesses aren't victimized by the system."

Coffey said the criminal justice system is an intimidating process. She added that many victims don't come to terms with the seriousness of their injuries until the following day.

Each case is referred by law enforcement officers and medical personnel. Cases are then assigned to an advocate who guides the victim or witness through the entire process.

The children in domestic violence situations are traumatized, sometimes for life. Ninety-five percent of boys and 72 percent of girls who witness abuse will carry domestic violence into their own relationships.

"I'll never forget the night my husband held a gun to my child's face, and her voice saying, 'Daddy please don't kill me.'" Winje said. "She still has nightmares 15 years later."

Winje said she looks forward to the shelter she will get through the Face to Face Project, partly for her children's sake. Winje will speak in Cal Poly's architectural building Monday at 1 p.m. in room 35A. Architecture students are also planning to design a shelter for domestic violence victims.

People interested in free consultation and plastic surgery due to domestic violence injuries should call 1-800-842-4546 to participate in or inquire about the Face to Face Project.

VOTING
continued from page 1

interested electorate than the number of people who vote," Walters said.

Agricultural business senior Brian Johnson said he thinks the online format would be a good opportunity to educate students about the candidates.

"It would be great if they could have on the Web page a photo of each candidate and a description of their stand on issues," Johnson said.

Walters said the committee is looking for feedback from students because many details are still undecided, including when or if online voting will become a reality.

The Elections Committee will finish its research by early February and decide whether to propose online voting to the Board of Directors, Moffitt said.

Snow falling on Farmers

Children don't often have the chance to play in snow in downtown San Luis Obispo. But last Thursday, they frolicked on a Higuera Street corner filled with imported snow during Farmers Market.

ASHLEE STEWART/MUSTANG DAILY

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Community establishes home for endangered coastal plants

By Monica McIugh
 MUSTANG DAILY STAFF WRITER

Nipomo Native Garden is looking for volunteers with green thumbs who enjoy working outdoors to help plant, weed and repair sprinklers at their 12-acre botanical garden.

According to their mission statement, the Nipomo Native Garden will feature plants from the seven plant communities on the Nipomo Mesa prior to European discovery of California.

The garden is in a residential neighborhood, located on the corner of Camino Caballo and Pomeroy in Nipomo. What used to be known as the Nipomo weed ranch is now an area where many native plants and creatures thrive.

“Our work here is more of a gesture of regard for what was already here,” said Herb Kandel, a member on the garden’s board of directors.

In 1994, when county parks considered selling the land to developers, local citizens gathered and proposed using the land for a native garden.

The idea of using the land to build a native garden came up in the community because that’s what the people wanted, said Kandel.

“I just like the thought of having a native garden as part of our community,” said Larry Vierheilig, president of the Nipomo Native Garden.

Now the land is under an adopt-a-park agreement in which the Nipomo Native Garden board is in charge of taking care of the land.

“It’s kind of organic the way we do things,” said Kandel. “Plants were placed kind of randomly, like nature would do it.”

Grasslands, wetlands, riparian marshes, oaks, coastal sage scrub and chaparral areas are being developed.

“We’re really advocating the chaparral community because of how rare it is,” said Kandel.

Chaparral sage is usually considered a fire hazard and bulldozed to make way for construction. Nipomo Native Garden is home to a variety of endangered species from the chaparral community.

With the help of AmeriCorps volunteers, three new pathways have been added to the park. More pathways will not be made until planted plants have matured and natural pathways have formed.

With a history of successful fundraising, Nipomo Native Garden has many hopes and plans for the future. Plans to plant California poppies along Pomeroy were established at the January board meeting.

“We’re creating a habitat for the future,” said Cindy Jenklem, a member of the garden’s board of directors. “I like the idea that a group of community members can make a difference.”

Work days are the first Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Those with specialized expertise in landscaping and irrigation are also welcomed and encouraged to attend. Contact Cindy at 928-3589.

Remember our native plants

Nipomo Native Garden is home to a variety of endangered species.

Nativo California plants have recently been recognized for their ability not only to attract fauna and wildlife, but to thrive with minimal care. Many landscape architects, designers, and environmental engineers weave this native California theme into the fabric that makes up their designs.

The idea is simple: utilize the tree, plant, and grass communities that encompass this vast state of California and blend them into our urban settings.

A California plant that you may be familiar with which also performs well in the landscape includes the Lupine, a soft green to silver evergreen that produces colorful blooms from stark white to deep purple.

Last spring along Highway 101, I noticed a variety of Lupine which bears yellow flowers. At Montana de Oro, the Lupine is a soft blue-white variety that compares the sand spit dunes.

The California Redbud is a small tree, which in early spring provides viewers with a spectacular show of red and pink blossoms. Found in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, this small tree was used by the Awahnee Indians and other Native American tribes to make baskets.

The California Redbud’s flexible branches, when made into baskets, carried acorns, roots, and other staples of early Indian life.

A large native tree here on the Central Coast is the California Sycamore. This graceful tree is found along stream banks and waterways and exhibits off-white peeling grey bark with large, often fuzzy leaves supported by huge limbs.

Lastly is the prominent Live Oak tree, also flourishing in many areas of our vast state. This "tough as nails" tree has provided evergreen shade for centuries, requiring little in terms of water and care.

Despite the vast array of California plant material, the average consumer traditionally plants exotic plants such as Camellias and Azaleas. These foreign plant introductions began on the East Coast and spread to California like wildfire. However, these foreign trees and plants are used to an environment which is very different than the dry Mediterranean climate we have here in California, resulting in their need for continual care, fertilizer and water.

All landscape projects need to be well planned and checked on a regular basis. California plants are no different. With time, native plants pay off and we are able to reap their many benefits.

Josh Weismiller is an environmental horticulture senior who writes a weekly Earth column.
Online voting for Poly raises new concerns

S
much for the red-and-white stripped curtain and that hole-punching mechanism used to select your favorite candidate. Cal Poly students may soon move their civic duty to the Internet if Associated Students propose to add online voting to the list of activities in their new Constitution.

Online voting has pushed voter turnout through the roof among high school students and is particularly prevalent in early presidential elections. Now third-year students at Cal Poly are considering whether to include online voting in their April ASU elections. The new concern is that such a move would allow uninformed students to vote without the opportunity to better learn about the candidates and issues in their elections.

What do you think about online voting for Cal Poly?
opinion@mustangdaily.calpoly.edu

Editorial

What do you think about online voting for Cal Poly?

Sure, voting numbers would skyrocket, but how legitimate would those numbers be? The ratio of concerned, educated voters to empty, ignorant voices would be the same, but the candidates would feel better about themselves because more people clicked a mouse than showed up at the booths.

In addition, rules prohibiting campaigning near polling places would no longer apply. Conceivably, candidates could plaster every computer lab on campus with campaign slogans and mug shots. Campaign members could run every lab and hawk their causes, creating an atmosphere of positive and negative feedback from students or administrators. However, Cal Poly needs to approach online voting with caution, considering the dangers that could accompany the process.

Two primary reasons keep students away from the polls every April for ASU elections and A.S.U. would like it to be. Laziness and lack of interest. Few students take the time to find their college-specific voting location. The rest never bother to know the candidates or find out what the ASU president actually does. That equals only 7.5 percent of students who voted in last year's elections.

In the future, Cal Poly could offer online voting as a way to keep more students informed of their right to vote. However, leaving ballot-counting in the hands of computers opens doors to new problems. Computer malfunction could alter the results. If a candidate demands a recount, voting may have to be handled at the individual level to ensure the legitimacy of the process.

The Elections Committee needs to take these dangers into account as it determines if online voting is right for Cal Poly. It’s not the quick fix that ASU would like it to be.

Like many major change in established policy, switching the voting process requires serious attention to detail. If these problems are addressed — perhaps by developing a new system and reintroducing the voting process — online voting can work.

Unsigned editorials are the voice of the Mustang Daily.

Opinion

Stop American-Cuban tug-of-war

He's a cute six-year-old boy, in many ways not unlike most boys his age in this country. He loves to laugh and play, was thrilled with a recent visit to Disney World and is excited about his new puppy. Elian Gonzales.

The big difference between this little boy and others in the United States is that this particular boy is in the midst of an international tug-of-war.

A survivor of a November 1999 shipwreck that occurred during an attempt to defect from the oppressive regime of Fidel Castro, Elian Gonzales has been used as a political pawn between the United States and Cuba.

Elian's mother, stepfather and 11 others perished in the shipwreck. A mother lost her life in an effort to give her child a better way of life than is possible in Communist Cuba. But the U.S. government swayed toward Immigration and Naturalization Services regulations that recognize the right of a parent to assert their interests in an immigration proceeding. Elian's father remains in Cuba and is demanding the boy's return.

Legal proceedings have been repeatedly postponed while proponents of Elian look for ways to keep him in the United States.

The emotional trauma resulting from the shipwreck and loss of his mother would be enough to trouble a child for years to come. Now young Elian is in the eye of a media storm exacerbated by the politics of two very different nations.

The boy is likely to have a far better life in the United States than he would in Cuba, and there are plenty of people in this country who are more than willing to give him that opportunity and raise him.

Many argue the fact is still has one surviving parent — his father, Juan Miguel Gonzales, who remains in Cuba — and should have sole parental rights. Unless there is reason to believe that Elian would be at risk by being placed in the custody of his father, he should be given a one-way ticket back to Cuba to live happily ever after.

The problem is that Elian's life back in Cuba is not going to be lived happily ever after. In his oppressive homeland, Juan Miguel Gonzales is his biological father, but Elian's real father is the father of all children of Cuba, Fidel Castro.

The boy has suffered enough trauma to last a lifetime, and it is time this battle over him came to an end. The U.S. government should see that the greater risk for the boy would be to return him to Cuba and an uncertain fate. It is in his best interest to remain in the United States where he will grow up with the understanding of his great ordeal and have the right to make decisions for himself.

Elian Gonzales won't have much to laugh about if he is returned to Cuba.

Teresa Wilson is a journalism senior and a Mustang Daily staff writer.

Letter policy

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Mustang Daily reserves the right to edit letters for grammar, content and length. Please limit length to 350 words.

Mustang Daily encourages comments on editorial policy and university affairs. Letters should be typewritten and signed with major and class standing. Preference is given to e-mailed letters. They can be mailed, faxed, delivered or e-mailed to opinion@mustangdaily.calpoly.edu

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Letters to the editor

Being gay isn't a choice
Editor, Megan Atenan's letter
("Homosexuals are more affluent than straights...") Jan. 21) does an excellent job of pointing out some often-ignored statistics, and her editorial certainly makes you stop and think. However, there is one major flaw in her letter: the last sentence.

Megan claims, "With stats like that, I don't know why more Poly students aren't seriously considering the move to a queer lifestyle." I don't know if this statement was made editorially, certainly makes you stop and think. However, there is one major flaw in her letter: the last sentence.

One of the most common myths about gay, lesbians and bisexuals is that we "choose" to be that way. Did straight "choose" to be straight? Of course not. I was born gay. I'm gay today. And I will be gay tomorrow. Straight people were born straight, and it is impossible to "turn gay". If someone you thought was straight turns out to be gay, or he or she has simply come to terms with their sexuality he or she was born with. Your friend is still the same person, the only "change" he or she has made is to share their sexuality with others.

Patrick Hoesterey is an architecture freshman.

Abortion saves some children from misery
Editor, The pro-life propaganda set forth by Alan Jamison ("Embrace a small life...") Jan. 21), although not typical of the ultra-right conservative ramblings usually found in the opinion pages, compels me to rebut. The most appalling statement made was that we need to be careful when "one impulsive moment quickly becomes a nine-month commitment." Try a minimum 18-year commitment, assuming you don't send your child to college. As a freshman.

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BASKETBALL

Report Card

From page 8

which seems to be a running theme so far this year.

"It seems like every game we come out slow," said Mayes, who was five of 12 from the field and made 10 of 11 free throws. "It always feels like we have to come from behind. We have to do something where we come out ready to play and find up and get on top of some teams, instead of them getting on top of us because it's hard to come back."

The Mustangs fought back successfully Thursday night, despite allowing Nevada freshman Terrance Green to score a game-high 32 points. Trailing 58-49 with 11:46 remaining, the Mustangs came down the stretch with a 12-2 rally, giving the Wolf Pack a 70-69 lead. The lead went back and forth until Green hit a 3-pointer with 22 seconds left, leaving time for Green to make the 3-pointer was errant. Nevada's Richard Stirgus collected the rebound, wrapped and continued to play the Utah State loss. He had it in the Rhode Island game and re-injured it early in the Utah State loss. He had it wrapped and continued to play the Nuggets scored 25 points against Nevada, tying a career high he set last year against Nevada ... The Mustangs go back on the road this weekend when they take on Long Beach State and Pacific, the two top teams in the West Division. ... The victory over Nevada was No. 61 for Schneider moving him ahead of Howie O'Leani for fourth all-time wins at Cal Poly.

Grade: A+

Chris Bjorklund was unstoppable in the second half Thursday, leading the Mustangs to a comeback victory. Saturday's four of 20 shooting was one of nine for the game.) The ball ended up in David Henry's hands, who made a short jumper for the 71-70 lead. "The ball just came right to me, and I just brought it right back up," Henry said. "I'll take one point for making it and give Chris a point for getting the rebound.

Henry's basket went in with eight seconds left, leaving time for Green to take the ball the length of the court. However, he was pressured the whole way down by Henry and Jason King, and the 3-pointer was errant. Nevada's Richard Ringus collected the rebound, but the put-back went in the hoop after time expired. The victory snapped a seven-game losing skid for the Mustangs and spoiled a perfect start for the Wolf Pack, who fell to 2-1.

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Grade: C-

Center: Chris Bjorklund was unstoppable in the second half Thursday, leading the Mustangs to a comeback victory. Sunday's four of 20 shooting was Bjorklund's worst game as a Mustang, yet he still managed five assists. John Haffert didn't look comfortable in the offense in limited minutes.

Grade: C+

Small forward: David Henry had the game-winner Thursday but missed an important wide-open 3-pointer. Played well Saturday on the glass but didn't look for his shot enough. James Grace gave the Mustangs a slasher from the wing that they hadn't had in awhile.

Grade: B-

Power forward: Jeremiah Mayes, right, was sensational Thursday with a double-double (25 points, 12 rebounds) and was the only offensive threat Saturday with 20 points and eight rebounds. Henry and Grace rebounded well when giving Mayes a break.

Grade: A-

Point guard: Jason King made two of four 3-pointers (all of which came when Poly needed a basket in each game) and ran the offense well. Mark Campbell wasn't a plus or a minus in either game.

Grade: B+

Coachings: Thursday, the Mustangs exploited a weak Nevada inside game but failed to implement the "box and one" on Terrance Green, which was effective, until late in the game. Saturday's poor shooting isn't the coaches fault. But King, the one guy who wasn't ice cold, didn't get enough shots.

Grade: B

Joe Noland

Sting

continued from page 8

The Carolina Hurricanes ended a five-month contract dispute with veteran captain and all-star Keith Primeau by trading him Sunday to the Philadelphia Flyers for Rod Brind'Amour.

"I am excited that there's finally a resolution, and am looking forward to playing in city like Philadelphia," said Primeau, a restricted free agent who has missed Carolina's first 45 games. Primeau, who had 30 goals last season, said he signed a five-year, $22.75 million contract with the Flyers and should be in uniform Thursday night. Carolina's first contract offer to Primeau in July was five years for $20 million. He turned down various other offers for fewer years and less money over the past few months.

Brind'Amour, an 11-year NHL veteran, had played in 484 straight games before missing the first 34 games this season with a broken left foot. Since returning to the lineup, the 6-foot-1, 200-pound center has eight points in 12 games.

"Not only have we resolved Keith's situation, but more importantly, we have improved our locker room," Carolina general manager Jim Rutherford said.

"He got very focused at the job at hand. There wasn't any, I'll have to call you back or I have to talk to my agent.' It was hockey."

Rutherford said Brind'Amour has two years remaining on his contract, which will pay him $3.5 million next season and then $4.2 million.

FLYERS

Flyers, Hurricanes swap stars

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The Carolina Hurricanes ended a five-month contract dispute with veteran captain and all-star Keith Primeau by trading him Sunday to the Philadelphia Flyers for Rod Brind'Amour.

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Not only have we resolved Keith's situation, but more importantly, we have improved our locker room," Carolina general manager Jim Rutherford said, alluding to Brind'Amour. "He is one of the NHL's best all-around centers and will boost our specialty teams.

"He brings character, leadership and toughness to our locker room."

Carolina coach Paul Maurice said Brind'Amour would center a line with wings Gary Roberts and Jeff O'Neill against Montreal on Monday night.

Maurice made the phone call to Brind'Amour to inform him of the trade. He was in Pittsburgh getting ready to play the Penguins.

"I think he knew the call was coming," Maurice said. "While there may have been a shock to it when he finally heard it, he is still that great pro and he snapped right into the arrangements of when he was coming."

"He got very focused at the job at hand. There wasn't any, I'll have to call you back or I have to talk to my agent. It was hockey."

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STERLING

continued from page 8

drive to establish their offense.

Mark Brunell's lack of mobility in the pocket plagued the Jaguars, as McNair outplayed him in nearly every way. Brunell, playing in his second AFC Championship game, was again unable to carry his team to the next level.

Tennessee, written off by everyone before their miracle play to beat Buffalo, is now heading to Atlanta for their first Super Bowl, and they deserve it.
Lakers halfway leaders

Los Angeles (AP) — The Los Angeles Lakers reached the halfway point of the season with a 33-8 record — best in the NBA by 2 1/2 games. And even coach Phil Jackson is surprised.

It's been an excellent three months for a group of players branded as undevelopable. Of course, the Lakers didn't have Jackson as coach until this season.

"It's pretty much the same group from last year," forward Buck Fox said. "I thought we'd have a little slower start."

No doubt, so did many others, including Jackson.

He acknowledged recently that the Lakers had picked up his system faster than the Chicago Bulls did when he became their coach 10 years ago. Led by Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen, the Bulls won six championships in the 1990s.

"The other surprise is Portland was the one being talked about at the beginning of the season, and we've been the team with the best record and no longer considered the most talented," Fox said. "We really want to be a surprise at the end. It's been 12 years."

The Showtime Lakers of the 1980s won five championships, most recently in 1988. The last time they reached the NBA Finals was 1991, when the Bulls beat them in five games for their first title.

Jackson quit after the last championship, following the 1997-98 season. He watched from the sidelines during the lockout-shortened 1998-99 season before signing a five-year, $33 million contract with the Lakers last summer.

"It's a very good basketball team. There's more than one way to skin the cat. There are certainly principles, you still need the tool to skin it. He's found a way to use the talent here to the best of its abilities."

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Mustangs split two in Big West

By Joe Nolan
MUSTANG DAILY MANAGING EDITOR

After a spectacular 71-70 victory Thursday night against Nevada, Cal Poly came out flat Saturday, scoring just 13 percent in a 24-62 loss to Utah State.

Good pressure defense kept the Mustangs in the game. Cal Poly forced 20 Utah State turnovers and only trailed the Aggies by two points with 6:37 remaining.

"As bad as we played, the amazing thing was we were only down two with (six minutes) to play," head coach Jeff Schneider said. "It's odd. We weren't shooting the ball well, they were shooting well and they just couldn't score against Danbury."

After a 20-second Aggie timeout, Utah State slowed the pace down and stretched out a nine-point run during the next four minutes. The Mustangs, however, didn't have another comeback in them, and Utah State held on to improve to a perfect 4-0 in the Big West. The loss, in front of the first Mont Gurnell sold out of the year, dropped Cal Poly 1-3 in the Big West.

In the Nevada game, the frontcourt combination of Jeremiah Mayes and Chris Bjorklund combined for 46 points, but Utah State's Shawn Daniels shut down Bjorklund, who was four of 20 from the field.

"We had a hard time scoring on Daniels," Schneider said. "Daniels dominated the game with 16 points and 17 rebounds, and Chris obviously didn't shoot that well. We got the ball consistently in the low post but just couldn't score against Danbury."

The Mustangs also couldn't score in the paint.

Tennessee, St. Louis headed to Atlanta

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — The Tennessee Titans found another improbable way to win.

This time it's taking them to their first Super Bowl in the franchise's 40 seasons — 37 of them as the Houston Oilers.

The Titans upset Jacksonville 31-14 on Sunday to win the AFC title, beating the Jaguars for the third time this season with a burst of 16 points in about 4 1/2 minutes in the third quarter.

Steve McNair led the way, running for 95 yards on nine carries and scoring on two 1-yard quarterback sneaks, despite limping all week with a bent to protect an injured toe.

Tennessee won it all season a little offense, a lot of defense, and a big contribution from special teams. The defense forced six turnovers.

The Titans trailed 14-10 at the half — but then came their third-quarter scoring binge.

It began with a 76-yard drive on six plays for the go-ahead touchdown on a sneak by McNair.

On the next sequence, Jacksonville's Kyle Brady fumbled and Jason Fisk recovered at the Jaguars 35. Frank Wycheck returned the fumble for 35 yards — with just four 1/2 minutes to go.

Two plays later, Fisk and Josh Evans sacked Mark Brunell in the end zone for a safety, and it was 19-14.

It also set up seven more points.

On the ensuing free kick, Derrick Mason, who earlier set up a score with a 44-yard kickoff return, went 80 yards for a TD to make it 26-14.

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The Midwest Express offense came alive just in time.

Kurt Warner threw a 9-yard touchdown pass to Ricky Proehl with 4:44 to go Sunday, lifting the mistake-prone St. Louis Rams to an 11-6 victory over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the NFC Championship.

The Rams, who struggled all day on offense, rode their unheralded defense and Warner's late heroics to the Super Bowl.

They will play Tennessee, which won the AFC crown in Jacksonville 31-14. The Titans beat the Rams in Nashville during the regular season, 24-21, but St. Louis opens as an 8-point favorite for next Sunday's game.

Tampa's gallant defensive effort wasn't enough against the Rams because backup cornerback Brian Kelly couldn't stay with Proehl down the left sideline on the long third-down pass.

Proehl, the Rams' No. 4 wide receiver, leaped to haul in his first touchdown of the season. He finished with six catches for 128 yards.

"If you are ever going to bet on someone coming up with a big play, bet on Ricky Proehl," Rams coach Dick Vermeil said.

The winning score was set up when Bucs rookie quarterback Shaw King was picked off by another rookie, cornerback Dre' Bly, at midfield.

AF title game a classic

Despite all the chaos in the NFL this championship game had the potential to be a classic. It pitted the best two teams of the conference against each other, something that doesn't happen very often.

The Titans walked confidently into Jacksonville to face the Jaguars, who had received only two losses at the hands of Jeff Fisher's Titans. It is said in the NFL that it is nearly impossible for any team to defeat another three times in a season, so the challenge was definitely there for Tennessee.

The Jags were favored by seven, but it was the Titans who walked out the victors, causing six turnovers en route to a dominating 31-14 win.

Steve McNair carried the team with both his running and passing attack, accounting for 20 percent of the Titans' offense with 91 running yards and 112 passing yards. It was McNair's 51-yard run in the fourth quarter that sealed the victory for the Titans, as well as his mobility in the pocket that led to so many key down-conversion.

The anticipated matchup between running backs Eddie George and Fred Taylor was relatively even, with Taylor picking up 110 yards on 19 carries and George running for 86 yards on 25 carries. However, the key was George's 25 carries, which helped the Titans establish their ball-control offense.

Having the Titans control the tempo was critical for victory, as it helped slow down a Jacksonville team that had put up 62 points against Miami a week ago. The Jags certainly didn't help themselves, committing nine penalties for 100 yards.

From the opening drive, it appeared that the Jaguars were on their way to another high-scoring effort, but the Titans came back to tie with a nine-minute punishing effort.