Learn by Leaning

Justin Fivella

Imagine taking a trip around the world where one minute you're basking in the golden South African sun and the next you're running through the open landscape of beautiful Australia.

No vivid imagination needed here, this is just one of the many adventures Cal Poly horticulture students experience daily as they take a trip through the on-campus arboretum that plays home to over 1,000 plants from all over the world according to arboretum director Thomas Eltzroth.

The Leaning Pine Arboretum, named after a unique leaning pine that once inhabited the grounds, can trace its roots as far back as the '70s, but formally became the Leaning Pine Arboretum in 1989 when Eltzroth became the director.

"When we created the grounds we felt we needed an on-campus display of the plants that students needed to learn," Eltzroth said.

What started out as less than an acre of plants has now blossomed into over five acres of lush landscape packed with plants from various parts of the world.

Eltzroth explained that there are over 10 different gardens on-site, but that the Chilean, Mediterranean, South African, Californian and Australian gardens are the five main gardens and sources of the facility's plants.

"People always find it interesting that plants from such different locations, some above the Northern Hemisphere and some below the Southern, all do extremely well here," Eltzroth said. People even ask if the plants in the Australian Garden bloom in the winter here because it's summer in Australia; even though they bloom during our spring like all the others do, Eltzroth said.

Unlike many other arboretums, the Leaning Pine prides itself on being both student-run and having some of the best landscape architecture around.

"I feel we have made a positive impact on the community as more local shops are now carrying some of the rarer plants we've introduced and it's always nice to see local landscapers up here with their clients showing them the grounds for different ideas," Eltzroth said.

Further distinguishing themselves as unique, the staff points out that unlike other arboretums that display rare plants typically unable to survive in the given area, the Leaning Pine takes plants from all over that can easily survive in the Central Coast and displays them in combinations.

Campus leaders shed light on energy plans

Nicole Small

The sun cast down favorable light Thursday at Empower Poly Coalition dedicated the new photovoltaic energy system located on the rooftop of the Engineering West building.

The ceremony took place at 11 a.m. on Dexter Lawn. This renewable energy project is the largest in San Luis Obispo County yet. Cal Poly joins Chico State and Dominguez Hills in experimenting with alternative energy among campuses in the California State University system.

Jesse Churchill, the president of Empower Poly, said, "This is the first major project to unveil and a lot more are on the way."

Empower Poly Coalition began about a year ago after the CSU system adopted a policy drafted by Cal Poly students and faculty. The policy requires all CSU campuses to reduce energy use while doubling on-site energy by 2014 and renewable energy by 20 percent before 2010.

Once the policy passed, Churchill said to make application of the project a reality for students to join forces and use the power of numbers.


"We have our own specific focus, but work towards the same goals," said David Kirk, the public relations coordinator for Empower Poly.

For instance, civil engineering graduate student Shawna Von Stockhausen sat at the Engineers Without Borders booth highlighting the dedication, page 2

Taco Bell faces potential fallout from E. coli outbreak

Alex Veiga

LOS ANGELES — An E. coli outbreak linked to Taco Bell restaurants left the fast-food chain with a major damage-control challenge Thursday. How can it reassure customers its food is safe even as the suspected cause of the outbreak remained unconfirmed?

The outbreak has left more than four dozen people sick in at least three states. Taco Bell ordered the removal of green onions from its 5,800 restaurants nationwide Wednesday after testing by an independent lab suggested the bacteria may have come from scallions.

Analysts said the Mexican-style restaurant chain is likely to see sales decline in the short term.

"You've got a crisis of confidence right now," said Michael Strick, a crisis-management expert. "What they need to do to bring people back in the stores is to assure them that what happened in the past cannot happen in the future.

Taco Bell, an Irvine, Calif., unit of Yum Brands Inc., told customers that in addition to getting rid of all its green onions, it sanitized the affected restaurants and set up a toll-free number for people to call with concerns.

Paul Argenti, a business professor at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H., said Taco Bell appeared to be doing a good job handling the problem.

"When you're in the middle of it, give people any information that you know, as much as possible," he said. "Try to be honest and open and transparent."

Argenti said he believes a television ad campaign to reassure customers is not necessary. Taco Bell has a loyal customer base that "will be looking for a reason to go back," he said. "Within six months, everything right itself."

Taco Bell spokesman Rob Portch said the chain is preoccupied with the investigation. He would not say if it plans a major publicity effort.

see Outbreak, page 2

Former ASI President Tylor Middlestadt (left) and current ASI President Todd Maki (center) spoke Tuesday on sustainable energy on campus.

see Dedication, page 2

IN SPOTLIGHT, 4

Friday, December 8, 2006

www.mustangdaily.net
**Local Briefs**

**Arroyo Grande** — Police responded to a gun threat on Thursday afternoon when an Arroyo Grande High School student threatened to bring the weapon to school, authorities said. After thoroughly investigating the situation, police said they found that the 17-year-old male made up the story. The student's parents were contacted and his house was searched for weapons, but no evidence was found to support the rumor, authorities said. The Arroyo Grande Police Department has determined the threat to be false.

**CAL POLY** — Student Community Services is organizing a holiday gift drive to donate gifts to children who wouldn't receive anything.

Donations will fulfill the wishes of children in organizations such as the Housing Authority, Child Welfare Services, Healthy Start, Equal Opportunity Commission, Healthy Start, Family Care Network and Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

To participate, gift wishes can be picked up in the Student Community Services office in room 217 in the University Union.

**CAL POLY** — Cal Poly's dean for Continuing Education and University Outreach, Dennis "Skip" Parks, was named president of the Association for Continuing Higher Education.

Parks was named to the position Oct. 30 after previously serving as a 1,5-year-old organization that promotes lifelong learning.

*Compiled by the Mustang Daily staff*

**Arboretum**

*Continued from page 1*

most would never consider.

"It's not about the rarest stuff in the field, it's about taking plants that people could never have and actually make them alive," said Eltrzoth.

Nestled near the top of Oliva Carta next to the Plant Shop, the staff hopes that more people will come walk the grounds and experience the beauty as an alternative to visiting local spots like Avila or Pismo beach.

"I didn't even know we had something like this on campus until my teacher mentioned something to my class, this place is awesome," business junior Stan Blek said. "After walking around for a little bit it is a great place to take a date or just get outside and enjoy."

Though most plants on-site, Eltrzoth mentioned that each day you can come up to the grounds and find something that is beautifully new because it is ever-changing.

"Though my favorite time is from March to June when everything is blooming, the beauty of all of it that you can come up here every day and find something new that is amazing," Eltrzoth said.

The Learning Pine Arboretum is open Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is free and open to all Cal Poly students and the public. For more information visit their Web site at www.learningpinearboretum.calpoly.edu.

**Outbreak**

*Continued from page 1*

The restaurant is working as closely as possible with authorities "to find the root cause of this," he said.

Also Thursday, federal and local officials were investigating two more suspected cases of E. coli linked to the outbreak in Idaho and South Carolina, far from the other cases concentrated in the Northeast. And in Delaware, at 14 Taco Bell restaurants closed for cleaning after a 15-year-old girl who ate at a Taco Bell in New Jersey was hospitalized.

Some local customers seemed unaware about the outbreak.

"I don't care. I've been eating at Taco Bell my whole life," said Josh Dowjak, 29, of Philadelphia, who devoured a meal dripping with cheese behind a Taco Bell in Gloucester, N.J.

But his co-worker, a fellow college student, expressed less gusto for the fast-food chain after learning about the outbreak.

"I didn't know about it. Otherwise I don't know if we would have come here," said Dale Gudmenson, 23, of applaud.

The company suggests that customers who are worried about the outbreak call its hotline, 1-800- TACO-BELL.

Barry Sawyer, an operator who answered the phone at the Miami-based call center, said he has handled 25 calls since Wednesday. Most callers were not ill; they just wanted to understand the situation.

"The majority are calling in and asking 'What's going on?'" Sawyer said "I don't think I've received any irate calls about it."

Dr. Douglas Archer, associate dean for research at the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida, said throwing out more than the scal­lions would be premature.

"If nothing's pointing to anything else, where would you stop if you started down that path?" he said. "Taco Bell has been around for a long, long time, and they've served billions and billions safely."

**Dedication**

*Continued from page 1*

Borders booth and shared her experience of traveling to Nicaragua twice already to survey the area and choose a project and site to work. Over the week of Thanksgiving students, including Von Stockhausen, who is the project manager, decided to build a water storage system for a health clinic. At this moment the team is in the designing stages and plans to return in July 2007.

Mike Marcus, from environmental affairs with Associated Students Inc., said, "It was great that students, faculty and administrators came together to support one goal, especially to support a self-sustaining campus."

Who those attended included Larry Kelly, from the administration and finance division, and Dan Howard-Greene, the executive assistant to President Warren Baker, who wasn't able to attend due to a scheduling conflict, but supports the coalition.

Empower is working on creat­ing a resource center in the old power house building where students and faculty interested in the topic can get information and become involved.

Kim Johnson, an architect junior, toured the different clubs booths because "she is an environmentalist and a little bit of a hippie and wants to learn about how to incorporate green architecture into design."

Recently, the coalition put together a video for a MTV and GE competition with a chance to win $25,000 used to campaign fundraising. Reconstruction of the old power house is expected to cost between $2 million to $3 million.

Other money-saving items Cal Poly has installed are waterless urinals and different lighting fixture.

Marcus stated that many oppo­nents say raising money for the above is a waste, but disagrees with them.

"No matter where people are on the political line, we all need energy," Marcus said.
State

MOORPARK (AP) — A Ventura County wildlife that burned five homes was sparked by fallen power lines, authori-
ties said.

The 13,600-acre Shellbek fire began Sunday and was con-
tained on Tuesday after Santa Ana winds drove it through
ranch and orchard lands.

Southern California Edison has some electrical lines in the
area and there also are privately operated lines, so it was unclear
whose lines were involved, Edison spokesman Steven
Connoy said Wednesday.

CAMP PENDELTON (AP) — A Marine squad leader
was arraigned Thursday on charges of kidnapping and
mutilating an Iraqi civilian.

Sgt. Lawrence G. Hutchins
III, of Plymouth, Mass., headed
an eight-man squad that prose­
cuts claimed took Hashim
Awad, 52, from his
home in the Iraqi town of
Hamdan. But the
scene was described as
grave and deteriorating. He was
asked at what point the situation
there, if not corrected, will be
hopeless.

WASHINGTON (AP) —
President Bush acknowledged
Thursday that the United States
needs a new approach in the
unpopular war and promised to
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but continued to oppose direct
U.S. talks with Iran or Syria and
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the Middle East.

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Cemetery attended by a Russian
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other exiled Kremlin critics.

In Moscow, Russian prosecu-
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WASHINGTON (AP) —
Senators raised sharp questions
Thursday about a special Iraq
commission's recommendations
for changing U.S. diplomatic and
military strategies in the war, as
the panel's leaders urged the
Bush administration and Congress to urgently work out a
new bipartisan approach. One of
the commission's co-chairs, former
Rep. Lee Hamilton, D-
Ind., underscored the urgency of
changing course in Iraq, where
conditions were described as
grave and deteriorating. He was
asked at what point the situation
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Wind ensemble's innovative style travels the world

Josh Krane
MUSIANC DAILY

For more than 36 years, the 60-piece Cal Poly Wind Ensemble has performed in some of the most famous venues in four continents. Despite being made up of mostly non-music majors, the group has earned an international reputation for music excellence and is consistently invited to play at renowned conventions and festivals throughout the world.

William Johnson, professor of music and conductor of the ensemble, said the wind ensemble constantly searches ways to create a more innovative sound and often incorporates nontraditional instruments into its pieces.

The piece "Concerto for Violin" features a violin, harp, pad bass and even synthesizers, which some traditionalists would consider blasphemous.

"We're different than what people normally would associate with a school band or military band. Today's composers are creating new sounds and breaking away from a normal sound," said Johnson, who has been at Cal Poly since 1966. "It makes it more entertaining and more interesting," he added, noting that the ensemble constantly reseaches ways to create more contemporary sounds.

"The music written these days is really experimental and just generally creative. Some beautiful compositions have been written over the last decade that I love. There are some composers where I think I can interpret music better than they can," Johnson said.

Playing modern pieces usually allows the band to communicate and receive suggestions from the original composer, an advantage Johnson said helps the music sound more authentic. There is also an element of originality to the songs the ensemble plays.

Cal Poly's more contemporary pieces "The music written these days is really experimental and just generally creative. Some beautiful compositions have been written over the last decade that I love. That's definitely something I like better about our group," Johnson said.

Johnson quickly pointed out that Cal Poly Wind Ensemble isn't as edgy as those that might be heard in New York or Chicago, but said he tries to introduce audiences to new sounds with the pieces he chooses.

"We're not completely over the top. I want people to come to our next concert. But that's the job of any ensemble. We don't want to give them what they want all the time; we want to stretch them a little bit," Johnson said.

Playing modern pieces usually allows the band to communicate and receive suggestions from the original composer, an advantage Johnson said helps the music sound more authentic. There is also an element of originality to the songs the ensemble plays.

A composer puts music on a page and you try to find out what they had in mind and try to be faithful to that. But there are some composers where I think I can interpret music better than they can.

—William Johnson
Music professor and ensemble conductor

• 1952 First acknowledgement of pregnancy on TV on "I Love Lucy."
• 1956 16th Olympic games close at Melbourne, Australia.
• 1969 Police surprise attack on Black-Panthers in Los Angeles.
• 1992 NBC announces that "Cheers" will go off the air in May 1993.
Wind
continued from page 4
“There’s a balance. A composer puts music on a page and you try to find out what they had in mind and try to be faithful to that. But there are some composers where I think I can interpret music better than they can,” Johnson said.

This summer, the ensemble joined the Cal Poly Choir for a 16–
day tour through Europe that went through Hungary, Austria, Germany and the Czech Republic.

“It was an incredible experience. We played in some unbelievable cathedrals and churches that were not huge and had great acoustics. Just to play there instead of a normal concert hall was so different and an incredible experience,” Fratkin said.

The groups performed the cornerstone piece of the tour, “Requiem,” a 50-minute epic inspired by the 1956 Hungarian uprising against the Soviet Union, in a packed concert hall in Budapest, Hungary. It was the first time the piece had been played in 10 years.

The piece’s original composer, Frigyes Hidas, was in the audience. Fratkin, who could see him seated in the second row as the piece was played, said the composer remained expressionless throughout the piece but came up to thank both groups after the song ended.

“Even though he wasn’t able to talk to us, you could tell it meant a lot to him,” Fratkin said.

Johnson said the wind ensemble probably won’t get out on another tour for a few years, but the group has some big dates scheduled for next year.

The ensemble will perform at the Christopher Cohan Performing Arts Center March 7, 8 and 9.

It will be hosting the American Bandmasters Association Convention at this time.

“This is the biggest honor. It’s the most prestigious bandmasters association. It’s an honor to host it and perform for it,” Johnson said.

The ensemble will also perform an Open the PAC concert on June 9, both in spring concert on June 9, both in

Mark Your Calendar
The wind ensemble will perform at Open House on April 21 and at their spring concert on June 9.

Don’t miss out!

The 60-piece Cal Poly Wind Ensemble has performed in four continents and will play at the PAC in March, April and June.

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December 11-15 • 8:30am - 4:30pm

Mt. Bishop Road Drive Through
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WWJD? Spin the dreidel and schmooze

Mike's Guide to Life

by Mike Heinowitz

Channukah, Channukah, or whatev­ er other way you want to try. Just make sure you don't make the coughing-of-phlegm noise, while saying the beginning of the word, you'll be correct while saying it. Now, Hannukah is known as the "festival of lights."

Because of this, it often gets mixed up with Christmas because of all the lights on people's homes, but you should be learning the differ­ences from this article.

The basis to this holiday is that it tells you how to remember the bloodshed of the Syrians, and all the bad things that happened, and how to remember the bloodshed of the Jews is to eat oily foods like latkes. This is the "festival of lights."

From this, we can have fun with this spell and it will kill Hannukah, Hannukkah.

"To the season to be jolly, unless, well you're not into all the medi­ hyped holiday festivities that go on. 'Tis also the article where I promise that for the rest of the "Guides to Life" I ever write, I will never use the word "jolly" again. So, I might as well live it up because 'twas article will only happen once, and I would like to continue to use the word as incorrectly as possible. While we're at it, I promise that I won't use the word "jolly" again in any more of my "Guides to Life" either, so just bear with me for the rest of this one while I have my fun.

Anyways, since this is the last article I will be writing before winter break, perhaps it would be fitting to break down the holiday season for you. Even though it might seem to be on a strange, straight way, sure can be confusing. I'll start with the big one. Christmas. Apparently, JC came out of the womb a little plump, really red and fully bearded. And, 'tis the reason for Santa Claus. Tell me there is another reason, but there is also America's obesity problem and crappy job market. Christmas gives opportun­ ity to fat, unemployed men everywhere to play Santa Claus.

So anyways, back to the birth of JC. I think we all know this from the Bible and whanot, JC was quite different from the other one who is also called Messiah or not, but rather a bigger differ­ ence. Of course, while the other children had normal dad and can, Jesus had nine reindeer. It was a lot to keep up. And, besides, WWJD? Well, Jesus put Rudolph in charge to lead the way, taking some of the responsibility off of himself to try and do it.

While this was all taking place, someone had the genius idea to put a bit larger proportion of tar in JC's house, which also stuck in today's tradi­tions. Remember that since JC's house likely did, this people would sort of have to let her do what she wanted. I mean, she was always a little bit of a pain, having a ton of reindeer, so it was obvious that nobody would go in her way and do something that she couldn't have a tree inside.

Moving on to the one I actually don't have much thing about, which is Hannukah. Now, right off the bat we can have fun with this spell and it will kill Hannukah, Hannukkah.

1 Unless of course I'm talking about a hamburger shop, because there is another way besides "jolly" to describe one.
2 Of course, though, all my work is on www.mustangdaily.com for your reading over break.
3 And with the authority to grant children their presents while the kids are on the men's laps?
4 They also actually tried to take sheep crap and smear it all over the walls in their house, but that one surprisingly wasn't as popular a practice.
5 I thought there should actually be at least one real fact in this piece.
6 Amused welcome back to more ridiculous shit.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hookah not as bad as article implied

The hookah article (Dec. 6) had little real information and was extremely misleading. The majority of Shisha (tobacco) used in hookah is imported from the Middle East. The countries of origin often require tar, nicotine and car­ bon monoxide content to be listed on the package. You'll find that there's almost no need to smoke hookah, because this hookah has 0.0002 milligrams of tar, nicotine & Hedges have 15mg of tar and 1.4 milligrams of nico­ tine. Camel, Pall Mall, and Dunhill brands boast equiva­ lent numbers. There are even tobacco/nicotine/tar-free molasses-based shishas on the shelves.

Oh, and carbon dioxide is what you exhale anyway — if you choose to. If you cause you hold your breath, you'll get lightheaded even without tobacco! Carbon Monoxide is the car­ toxin present in large amounts in cigarettes, and is nearly absent from shisha. Interestingly how Wheaton (a history major) was asked a question by a student about organic chemistry major. What we have been pre­ sented in the hookah article was misinformation and pro­ paganda. As a student of an American university, I am ashamed at the blatant disre­ gard for the facts and value of accurate and informa­ tional articles. This issue has obviously been contrived as an inflated public health problem, when it is in fact a private cultural consideration. That article belonged in the opinion sec­tion, not the front page.

Where has journalistic integrity gone?

Christopher Dean Sahms

Philosophy Junior

Students need coffee machines final week

It seems that both of the coffee vending machines on campus — in Kennedy Library and The Park — are currently "out of order." (If there are others, please be so kind as to point me in their direction.)

This is a plea on behalf of us POL students who crave that oh-so-delicious vending machine coffee, and who can't afford it at Julian's. I'm not sure who to address this letter to, but this is tanta­ mount to a cry for help.

Please fix these glorious machines as soon as possible. My GPA and fragile young minds are dependent on it!

Benjamin J. Biesek

Philosophy senior
Chambers caught two touchdowns.

Both teams enter the game with different winning streaks to their credit. UMass boasts a school-record 11-game winning streak, but the Golden Bears have won Montana's 12-game hot streak. That Grizzlies streak includes winning their last eight games.

Washington-Grizzly Stadium is one of the toughest places to play in the nation. Montana consistently recorded attendance figures in the low 20,000 range this season, with the season-promo coming Nov. 18. That day the Grizzlies took on Montana State and lost, 13-7.

"We're just going to have to prepare our game the best we can for it," UMass coach Don Brown said of the hostile environment his team will enter. "Our best signal, that, silent cadences, but it could be tough to assimilate during the practice. But playing on the road is just a different feel of that coin, on a positive side, we had a great crowd last week at our place — it was extremely loud."

Offense led Montana throughout the regular season, but defense was the key Saturday, and according to Brown, it's been that way throughout the post-season. "They're playing very good defense lately, especially over the last three weeks," he said in a conference call Monday. "I thought they.

"They're playing very good defense lately, especially over the last three weeks," he said in a conference call Monday. "I thought they..."
Fifth-ranked Oklahoma wrestling team visits No. 19 Cal Poly on Saturday

The Mustangs are yet to compete in a dual meet this season.

Tristan Aird
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Cal Poly wrestling team has performed well enough to maintain its national ranking of No. 19 in the W.I.N. Magazine poll, but head coach John Azevedo is not thrilled with its consistency so far this season.

Azevedo and the Mustangs will get a chance to prove themselves when fifth-ranked Oklahoma visits Mott Gym at 6 p.m. Saturday for a nonconference dual meet that will showcase a combined eight wrestlers individually ranked in their respective weight classes.

"Most the guys have had their good matches and bad matches," Azevedo said Thursday. "It's just a matter of putting it together at the same time. Hopefully that happens Saturday."

Cal Poly unofficially began its season Nov. 16 with the Green & Gold Meet, an intrasquad scrimmage in which the two teams tied 23-23. The Mustangs then went to the Tri-Center Open, at which they topped team standings with 286.5 points Nov. 18.

At the 25th annual Cliff Keen Invitational in Las Vegas from Dec. 1 to 2, Cal Poly was 15th among 49 teams, a finish Azevedo was displeased with.

"We didn't wrestle well," he said. "We left a couple guys behind, which doesn't help your team score. Overall, I really don't think we compete as well as we can."

Cal Poly senior Darrell Vasquez won the Fullerton Open title at 133 pounds. The Mustangs also took three second-place finishes at the Fullerton Open.

With 49 points at the Cliff Keen Invitational, the Mustangs were led by Vasquez and senior Dave Roberts (141), who finished third and fourth, respectively.

In respective weight classes, Cal Poly junior Chad Mendes (125) is ranked second, Vasquez seventh and senior Matt Monteiro (179) ninth.

"Darrell's done a good job," Azevedo said. "He just lost that one match. David Roberts really wrestled really well at Vegas. Those guys are older. Of the younger guys, Chase Pani, looked well at Fullerton. Nick Hernandez wrestled tough."

Among Oklahoma's five ranked wrestlers are seniors Sam Hazzewinkel (125) and Matt Souers (149), who were both ranked second.

Azevedo said there is definitely a transition from the nonconference tournament stage to nonconference dual meets, especially against a perennial Big 12 conference power like the Sooners. Oklahoma is coming off a 17-15 loss to No. 2 Oklahoma State, which will visit Cal Poly at 1 p.m. Dec. 18.

"It's definitely different," Azevedo said. "Dual situation, one-on-one, school against school. That changes the dynamics a little bit. They're one of the top teams. I think the guys are excited to try to beat them."

Cal Poly will try to average 56.8 losses last year to both the Sooners and Cowboys this month.

"Being at home is part of it," Azevedo said. "Guys want to perform well in front of our home crowd. That helps us. I think it motivates guys to do well for the team too. When it's the dual, the team is more important (than individuals). Not to get beat bad. That all plays in.

Azevedo said that wrestling the two Big 12 powers should prepare the Mustangs for Pac-10 competition, which begins at 3 p.m. Dec. 18 against visiting Cal State Fullerton.

That was the case last year, when Cal Poly rallied from the tail of 36-8 losses against the two Big 12 schools to finish 10-7 overall, 6-3 in the Pac-10, second in the conference tournament and 23rd at the NCAA Championships.

"I think it helps going against Oklahoma and some other teams," Azevedo said. "It just makes them more confident coming into the Pac-10 duals as long as we stay healthy."

Agent: Giants near contract agreement with Bonds

San Francisco's controversial slugger is coming off a five-year, $90 million deal.

Ben Walker
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Barry Bonds and the San Francisco Giants are closer to reaching an agreement Thursday night, with the sides hoping to complete a deal that would keep the controversial slugger in the Bay Area.

"We met with the Giants today and made significant progress," Bonds' agent, Jeff Boris, said from the baseball winter meetings in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. "We're going to talk to them again tonight and we're optimistic."

While Oakland, San Diego, St. Louis and other teams showed interest in signing the 42-year-old free agent, the Giants had been considered the front-runners to re-sign their star.

There were no initial details on the value or length of a potential deal.

Bonds has 734 home runs and is 22 from breaking Hank Aaron's career record. He has played 14 seasons for the Giants and is coming off a $90 million, five-year contract.

Bonds missed nearly the entire 2005 season after three operations on his right knee, prompting speculation on whether he was almost done. But the left fielder bounced back this year to play 130 games, hitting .270 with 26 homers and 77 RBI.

Shaded by allegations of steroid use and a target of boo-birds in many opposing parks, Bonds has remained a fan favorite in the Bay Area. He has been tied to the Giants by family and history — his dad, Bobby, was a popular player with the team; his godfather, Willie Mays, is regarded as the greatest Giant of them all.

A seven-time NL MVP, a 13-time All-Star and an eight-time Gold Glove winner, Bonds has stolen more than 500 bases and is baseball's all-time leader in walks. Bonds met Wednesday with his former Pirates manager and now-Detroit skipper Jim Leyland, who is close friends with St. Louis manager Tony La Russa.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL UPDATE

San Diego State handed visiting Cal Poly a 70-68 overtime loss Thursday night at Cox Arena. Sophomore forward Megan Harrison led the Mustangs (4-4) with 20 points.

I-AA PLAYOFF UPDATE

San Diego State handed visiting Cal Poly a 70-68 overtime loss Thursday night at Cox Arena. Sophomore forward Megan Harrison led the Mustangs (4-4) with 20 points.

I-AA playoff battle set between Montana, UMass

The games just keep getting bigger for the Massachusetts football team.

The NCAA Division I Football Championship semifinal game takes place in Mosoula, Mont., with see I-AA Semifinal, page 7