

# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

BY ERIC BURDICK

"WE ENTERED THE SEASON WITH high and great expectations, and we worked hard in anticipation of a difficult schedule," said head football Coach Rich Ellerson. "There were great days and tremendous adversity."

Texas State ended Cal Poly's playoff run in early December with a 14-7 victory in the quarterfinal round at San Marcos, Texas, but that didn't dampen the tremendous success the Mustangs have enjoyed since Ellerson's arrival in 2001.

The team had a perfect 6-0 mark in home games, including wins over ranked schools Montana State, North Dakota State and Eastern Washington. Three consecutive wins at home in November propelled the Mustangs into the playoffs and the historic 35-21 triumph over national powerhouse Montana in the first round of the playoffs at Missoula – Cal Poly's first win in 11 tries against Montana's Grizzlies.

Senior defensive end Chris Gocong won the Buck Buchanan Award, recognizing him as the nation's best defensive player in Division I-AA. He was also named first-team All-American by the American Football Coaches Association, Walter Camp Foundation and The Sports Network.

Junior linebacker Kyle Shotwell broke a record for tackles in a season (158), and redshirt freshman running back James Noble rushed for 1,578 yards and 16 touchdowns, both school records.

Other top Mustangs were quarterback Anthony Garnett, wide receiver Jonah Russell, offensive linemen Beau Finato and Brett Gauld, cornerback Courtney Brown and safeties Aaron Williams and Kenny Chicoine.

Ellerson was named Great West Coach of the Year by his peers for the second consecutive year. ■

Mustang fans can play a vital role in completing Memorial Plaza at the Spanos Stadium, now under renovation, by buying brick pavers to honor victims of the 1960 plane crash that claimed the lives of 16 football players, among others. Bricks can be engraved with a personal message. For more information, call (805) 756-2255 or go to [www.GoPoly.com/news/20052006/Bricks.html](http://www.GoPoly.com/news/20052006/Bricks.html).



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