

By Vytas Mazeika
Daily News Staff Writer

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COASTING: The Foothill women's water polo team is the prohibitive favorite to win its fourth straight Coast Conference tournament, which begins today at noon at CSM.

"It's a beautiful facility," Bissell said of CSM's new aquatics center. "It's much better than the little dunk tank that they had. We're a big-water team, and we like to get out in the open and swim."

The Owls (18-2, 7-0) swept their conference foes during the regular season -- with the closest a 6-2 win over Merced. But Foothill coach Jeff Bissell isn't taking anything for granted, also noting CSM gave them a tough time in their previous match (a 7-1 win for Foothill). "We talk about playing team defense and how we all have to work together as an unit," Bissell said. "And if we have one person not pull their weight, what we're trying to do might fail."

The good news is goalkeeper June Afshar (Palo Alto) is back after missing three weeks with a concussion. Afshar made 18 stops in the win over Merced. "By far she was a big reason why we won," Bissell said. Kendall Preston (Mountain View) leads the team with 56 goals while fellow sophomore Jen Sandstrom is close behind with 48. It helps to have freshmen like Daphne Nunez and Shameem Jamil (Paly) fully integrated into the team's offense, with 12 goals apiece.

Foothill plays Laney at noon while host CSM plays Ohlone at 1:15 p.m. If both Foothill and CSM win, they would play each other Saturday in a semifinal at 10 a.m. with the championship game is scheduled for 4:30 p.m.