

standard for batting average.

There have been a few lowlights — a 10-5 loss to Missouri in February, 11-1 loss to Arizona State in April and a three-game setback at Washington — but the Cats have some impressive feats on their spring résumé, including blowouts wins against ASU and a 5-0 blanking of Mizzou.

**Georgia Tech (35-6, No. 5)**

Defending Atlantic Coast Conference champion Georgia Tech has a higher goal this spring — the school's first NCAA crown. Senior second baseman Jen Yee is on target to pick up some major individual hardware, and that's vaulted the Yellow Jackets into the national title fray.

Yee leads the nation in slugging percentage, on-base percentage and home runs per game and is the fifth-toughest batter to strike out (once every 48.5 at-bats). She's second in batting average (.567) and second in walks. Kristine Priebe (.342, 11 homers), Kelsi Weseman (.315, eight homers) and Hope Rush (12 homers, 34 RBI) add some firepower.

"(Priebe) puts herself in the position to be successful and that's what we ask of her," head coach Sharon Perkins said. "She gets in there and knows what pitch she's looking for, she'll fight off other pitches until she gets the pitch she wants, and she's been really successful."

Rush, a freshman, has also emerged as the team ace, compiling a 19-4 record with a 1.43 ERA. Rush is 7-1 with a 1.56 ERA against ranked teams this season. She holds shutouts over ranked teams Florida, North Carolina and Texas A&M. One of her two no-hitters this season came against the Tar Heels.

The deep pitching staff also features Jessica Coan (10-1, 2.16) and Kristen Adkins (6-1, 2.35).

"Unless you have a true strikeout pitcher, someone who is going to throw every game for you, which we've never

had here — we've never had the luxury of that — you have to have a strong staff," Perkins said. "You have to have somebody that can keep other teams off-balance and be able to mix, depending on what the hitters look like, so it's nice to be able to have the other people come in and throw also."

Rush and Yee are top 25 finalists for the national player of the year award.

**Arizona State (35-6, No. 6)**

After opening April with a disappointing three-game set against in-state rival Arizona, the Sun Devils rebounded for their first-ever sweep of a three-game series at UCLA.

Just a

sophomore, Katelyn Boyd could rewrite the ASU record books before she graduates. She ranks third nationally in on-base percentage, fifth in homers and seventh in slugging. The ASU attack ranks second in the country to Arizona.

Coach Clint Myers, who guided the Sun Devils to the 2008 College World Series title, can count on a deep pitching staff, with Hilary Bach the go-to starter with a 17-2 mark and 1.99 ERA. Megan Elliott is 11-1 while freshman Sam Parlich is 7-3.

Consistency against the big guns will be crucial. ASU's seven-game win streak was derailed April 1 when Arizona outslugged the Sun Devils 12-6. State responded with an 11-1 win the next day — the first time ASU had ever run-ruled the Wildcats — but 'Zona bats dominated in the series finale, 14-2.

The weekend of April 9-11, ASU swept UCLA 8-5, 4-2 and 2-1 to solidify its position in the conference race.

**Alabama (31-9, No. 7)**

An 11-1 win against Northwestern on April 11 marked the seventh straight win for Patrick Murphy's Crimson Tide.

"It was a fun day all the way around because (Kayla) Braud came back big time," Murphy said. "Up and down the lineup, every spot in the order got on base at least



Jen Yee - Georgia Tech



Donna Kerr - UCLA

once. It was a good performance in all aspects of the game."

Bama has scored impressive wins against Missouri, Michigan and Florida this spring. Ranked ninth nationally in batting average and eighth in slugging, Alabama is paced by Braud (.487 average, 45 runs) and Charlotte Morgan (.347, 11 homers, 43 RBI). Braud, a dynamic freshman infielder, compiled a 103-game hitting streak at Marist High School in Oregon. She has found the collegiate batter's box to be just as friendly, leading the SEC in average, runs, triples and total bases while earning national player of the year consideration.

On the mound, Kelsi Dunne is ranked ninth nationally with 11.4 strikeouts per seven innings. She has an 18-4 record and 2.27 ERA, while Lauren Sewell chips in with seven wins and a 2.39 ERA.

**UCLA (27-9, No. 8)**

A 12-1 March boosted UCLA to its typical perch near the top of the national rankings. But after winning their Pac-10 opener against Washington on April 1, the Bruins dropped five consecutive league decisions, scoring just 11 runs in those five games.

Still, does anyone really want to face UCLA come tournament time?

The Bruins rank eighth in team batting average, ninth in slugging percentage and fifth in team ERA.

Player of the year top 25 finalist Megan Langenfeld leads the Bruins in batting average, home runs and slugging percentage, and the senior has some impressive mound numbers, with a 4-1 record and 1.14 ERA. Donna Kerr (13-5, 1.82 ERA) and Aleah Macon (8-1, 0.81 ERA) join Langenfeld to give UCLA one of the deepest rotations in Division 1.

Washington is the team to beat, and UCLA has proven it can shut down the Huskies. In that 1-0 win against Washington on April

1, Kerr struck out eight and sophomore Dani Yudin delivered a two-out RBI single for the winning margin.

**Oklahoma State (36-7, No. 9)**

Enjoying the program's best season since 1993, the Cowgirls reeled off 13 straight wins heading into mid-April, with strong pitching the difference maker.

Junior Anna Whiddon and freshman Kat Espinosa have turned in stellar seasons. Whiddon is 18-3 with a 1.95 ERA, while Espinosa is 15-3 with a 1.24 mark. At the plate, four players — Mariah Gearhart, Julie Ward, Chelsea Garcia and Tamara Brown — are batting above .300. Gearhart leads the team at .403, while Ward sets the slugging percentage pace at .713.

**Stanford (30-6, No. 10)**

Entering mid-April, Stanford had yet to play Pac-10 powers Arizona, Arizona State, UCLA and Washington. Still, 30 wins and two stars in the running for national player of the year are reasons enough to keep an eye on the Cardinal.

Senior Alissa Haber and freshman Teagan Gerhart are top 25 finalists for USA Softball's Collegiate Player of the Year.

Three-time All-American Haber ranks ninth nationally in batting average (.480) and leads the team in runs, hits, total bases and slugging percentage.

Gerhart is 22-5 with a 1.58 ERA and 169 strikeouts, holding opponents to a .177 average.



Alissa Haber - Stanford