

SJM 5/28/92 B-1 BANANA SLUG

Slug outpaces mascot competition, claims No. 1

BY LEE QUARNSTROM
Mercury News Staff Writer

If Cori Houston has her way, sports fans at the University of California, Santa Cruz will someday be able to cheer their team while the award-winning school mascot watches from a terrarium on the sidelines.

Even though there isn't exactly one team mascot, Houston, UC-Santa Cruz head of athletics, says she sees plenty of candidates for the terrarium — banana slugs — as she pedals her bike to work.

Now the slug, a yellow gastropod common to the redwood forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains, has been chosen as the country's top team nickname by the National Directory of College Athletics. The Slugs outpointed such stalwart team monikers as the University of California, Irvine Anteaters, the Richland Thunderducks, the Whittier Poets, the Evergreen State Geoducks and even the Wonderboys of Arkansas Tech. Second place in the voting by a panel of experts went to the Stormy Pe-

trels of Oglethorpe.

UC-Santa Cruz teams officially went by the Sea Lion nickname until a few years ago, when then-Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer, a strong supporter of keeping that marine mammal as the school mascot, caved in to student pressure and gave his stamp of approval to the Banana Slug.

The Slugs field several men's and women's teams in Division III of the NCAA. They compete in basketball, fencing, swimming and diving, soccer, volleyball and tennis — a sport where the Slug men have excelled in recent years, finishing second in their division in the national tournament earlier this spring.

Houston says she was contacted recently by a writer for a national magazine hoping to come up with a description of the school's mascot.

"Would you describe it as a slimy yellow mollusk?" the writer wanted to know.

"Yes," Houston told her, "I guess I would."



*University of California
— Santa Cruz*