

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 18, 2003

Contact: Will Wolper
wwolper@iowaconference.com
319-366-4845

2003-04 IOWA CONFERENCE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Buena Vista University is the favorite to win its first Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) women's basketball title since 1997. The Beavers' received five first-place votes in the Conference Coaches Poll and finished with 75 points, edging out Loras College by six points. Loras, one of the Conference's tri-Champions last season received three first-place votes while another defending tri-Champion, Wartburg College, received one first place vote and finished third in the Poll with 63 points. The complete 2003-04 IIAC Women's Basketball Coaches Poll follows.

Rank	School	Points
1st	Buena Vista (5)	75
2nd	Loras (3)	69
3rd	Wartburg (1)	63
4th	Simpson	60
5th	Luther	41
6th	Central	34
7th	Dubuque	30
8th	Coe	17
9th	Cornell	16
Note: First-place votes in parenthesis; Points awarded 9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1		

The Conference coaches expect a competitive race for the Conference Championship with as many as four or five teams strongly contending for the title.

"Loras and Buena Vista have the best returning group, but there are probably five different teams that will be in competition for the title," Simpson coach **Brian Niemuth** said.

"Again this year, there seems to be a lot of parity within the Conference. Not necessarily any stand out teams but everyone will have to be ready to play each night," Luther coach **Jane Hildebrand** said. "I think there are about four teams that could vie for the Conference title."

Many coaches believe the development of the newcomers could have a great impact on how the race turns out.

"The Conference graduated some tremendous seniors last year, but the freshmen class looks to be strong and ready to contribute," Cornell coach **Nicole Kotrba** said. "I think we'll see some teams who finished in the bottom third of the Conference move up and contend for a spot in the top half."

"Loras and Buena Vista return solid teams while many other teams have had good recruiting years and should provide an interesting season during which any team can beat another," Wartburg coach **Monica Severson** said.

Buena Vista University Beavers (19-8, 13-5 4th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 4/1

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 8/1

About the 2003-04 Beavers: Buena Vista finished fourth in the Conference last season but was just one game behind the Conference tri-Champions (Loras, Simpson, Wartburg). The Beavers led the Conference in scoring offense (75.3 points per game) and return a veteran line-up along with a strong group of freshmen.

“We expect to have a great year with the return of All-American **Amy Meggers** and senior captain **Kelli Taylor**. We like our freshmen class and feel we have some good depth to compete for the title,” said 12th-year head coach **Janet Berry**.

Meggers, a senior forward, is the reigning Iowa Conference Most Valuable Player after leading the Conference in scoring and ranking fourth nationally with a 22.8 point per game average. She also ranked second in the Conference with 9.0 rebounds per game. Meggers shot 47.2 percent from the floor and ranked 11th in the Conference, behind, among others, teammate **Kristina Kapler** (54.3 percent, 3rd in IIAC).

Sophomore guard **Katie Maguire** was a Second Team All-Conference selection as a freshman after finishing 22nd in the Conference in scoring (10.1 ppg) and seventh in assists (3.52 apg). Taylor averaged 11.3 points per game, which ranked 17th in the IIAC and was third in the Conference in three-point field goal percentage (40.9 percent)

Buena Vista's other top returnees include sophomore guard **Kelli Staley**, who averaged 5.0 points and 4.0 rebounds per game to go along with a team-high 49 steals in 27 games off the bench; senior guard **Megan Holtorf**, who started all 27 contests as a junior; junior guard **Lindsay Stoolman**, junior forward **Jess Griggs**, junior guard **Crystal Richardson**, senior forward **Gelene Bousum**, sophomore guard **Jennifer Dewald**, sophomore forward **Holly McDonough** and sophomore guard **Crystal Kruger**.

Six freshmen looking to crack the Beaver line-up include centers **Penni Heitmann** and **Christine Meyer**, and guards **Tracy Hartwig**, **Lindsey Meyer**, **Tia Moore** and **Jamie Murray**.

Central College Dutch **(9-17, 6-12 T-7th in IIAC)**

Starters Returning/Lost: 3/2

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 5/2

About the 2003-04 Dutch: Central will look to bounce back from its 9-17 season with three returning starters and five returning letterwinners but must do so without team leading scorer and rebounder **Amy Steenhoek** who graduated with her 18.7 points and 9.4 rebounds per game. She led the Conference in rebounds and ranked third in scoring.

Although the Dutch will need to find some scoring power, they have the players to get the ball to the scorers. Junior guard **Rachel Lenox** and senior forward **Amanda Hamm** were both among the top-15 in the Conference in assists last season. Lenox ranked ninth, averaging 3.23 assists per contest. Hamm was 11th with 2.8 assists per game.

Central had three of the top-20 rebounders in the Conference last season but only senior center **Jenny Randeris** returns. She was 13th in the Conference last season with 6.5 rebounds per game including 3.15 offensive rebounds per game, which ranked second in the IIAC.

Senior center **Christy Nichting** also returns, having seen action in 25 games off the bench last season averaging 3.2 points and 2.7 rebounds per game.

Junior center **Cara Hegner** leads the group of newcomers. Hegner transferred to Central from Cornell where she averaged 10.6 points per game (20th in IIAC), 8.6 rebounds per game (3rd in IIAC) and 2.0 blocks per game (3rd in IIAC).

“Fans can expect a new look from Central College. We have many new faces and with the bigger roster comes depth that has not been available in the past,” third-year head coach **Mick Angel** said. “I look for the team to improve throughout the season as inexperienced players gain valuable court time and get better and better.”

Coe College Kohawks
(5-20, 3-15 T-9th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 1/4

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 3/7

About the 2003-04 Kohawks: Coe struggled through a 5-20 last season in **Melissa Bruner's** first year as head coach with a young roster that included seven freshmen and four sophomores. Several of those key contributors from last season have chosen to pursue other interests this winter but many new faces will lead the Kohawks this season.

“With the commitment and determination that I have seen so far from this group, we expect to continue to improve throughout the year and be competitive night in and night out,” Bruner said. “We look forward to reaping the benefits of our hard work with a strong Conference finish.”

Among the returnees this season are junior guard **Holly Zimmerman**, senior guard **Natalie Hibler** and senior forward **Kathleen Hudson**. Zimmerman, the lone returning starter, ranked fifth in the Conference in assists (4.12 per game) and 13th in steals (1.72 per game). She ranked fourth on the team with 6.8 points per game.

Hibler averaged 4.3 points and 1.9 rebounds in 20 games off the bench last season. Hudson appeared in just five games last season after spending the second semester studying abroad. In her five contests, she averaged 5.4 points and 3.2 rebounds.

A pair of 5-11 centers – sophomore **Morgan Bailey** and freshman **Melissa Hanneman** – lead the group of newcomers to the Coe roster that includes freshmen **Erica Langland**, **Leslie Schnack**, **LaToshia Burrell**, **Jamie Krall**, **Sarah Dolan**, **Melissa Eilert** and **Cassidy Brandt**.

Cornell College Rams
(12-14, 7-11 6th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 1/4

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 7/10

About the 2003-04 Rams: Graduation and transfers have left Cornell with just one starter and seven letterwinners returning from last season's 12-14 team.

"After graduating five senior last year, it's a great time for our upperclassmen to step-up and make their own mark on the program," second-year head coach **Nicole Kotrba** said. "We've started the season with student-athletes who have a passion for the game and a dedication to making this program better. Therefore, this team will play with a tremendous amount of heart and intelligence."

Junior forward **Erika Pepmeyer** is the lone returning starter. She ranked second on the team and 12th in the Conference in scoring (12.1 ppg) and rebounding (7.0 rpg). She also had 62 assists, third on the team.

Junior guard **Danielle Tancredi** contributed 3.2 points, 2.2 rebounds and 1.6 assists in 26 contests off the bench. Sophomore center **Katie Morris** looks to bounce back from an injury that limited her to five games last season. In her limited action, she averaged 8.8 points and 5.4 rebounds per game.

After sitting out last season, junior guard **Beth Linderbaum** returns this season. In 2001-02 she averaged nearly two points per game in 20 contests. Freshman guard **Diana Finkle** is looking to contribute immediately to the line-up.

University of Dubuque Spartans (12-14, 6-12 T-7th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 4/1

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 7/3

About the 2003-04 Spartans: Dubuque is coming off its best season in recent history and returns seven letterwinners from its 12-14 season.

“We hope to build off of last season’s success. Having added depth and returning four of the five starters, the 2003-04 season looks bright. We are expecting to continue to learn and get better each night out,” second-year head coach **Todd Huffman** said.

Leading the group of returnees is All-Conference guard **Dana Kester**. She led the Conference in steals (2.73 spg), finished second in scoring (19.3 ppg), second in three-point field goal percentage (41.2 percent), fifth in three-point field goals made (1.81 3pg) and sixth in assists (3.85 apg).

Joining Kester in the backcourt is junior **Jessica Cox** who averaged 13.4 points and 3.31 assists per game last season, ranking seventh and eighth in the Conference in the respective categories. She also averaged a Conference-best 2.73 three-point field goals per game, connecting on 36 percent of her threes.

Forwards **Nichol Haase** and **Nikki Kayon** also return to the starting line-up. Haase, a senior, ranked 21st in the Conference in scoring with a 10.1 point per game average. She also ranked fourth in the Conference in free throw percentage (85.2 percent). Kayon, a sophomore, averaged 4.7 points and 4.2 assists per game as a freshman.

Junior center **Taylor Foltz** appeared in 25 games including 11 starts. She finished fifth in team scoring with 6.2 points per game. She also contributed 3.8 rebounds per game.

Senior forward **Kelly Thompson** and sophomore center **Lacey Lucey** round out the experienced returnees. In 26 games last season, Thompson averaged 3.4 points and 2.9 rebounds per game. Lucey averaged 3.2 points and 2.6 rebounds in 24 games.

Loras College Duhawks
(22-7, 14-4 T-1st in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 3/2

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 8/3

About the 2003-04 Duhawks: Loras is coming off its first Iowa Conference basketball championship and first appearance in the NCAA Tournament last season.

“I expect our team to be competitive and hopefully we can just get better as the season progresses and peak at the right time to make a run,” second-year head coach **Larry Lawler** said.

Leading the way for Loras is two-time All-Conference center **Alicia Davis** who was a Second Team All-Region selection last season after finishing second in the nation in field goal percentage (67.7 percent) and 12th nationally in blocked shots (3.0 blocks/game). She finished sixth in Conference scoring (14.3 ppg) and rebounding (8.0 rpg).

Davis is on pace to set the NCAA all-divisions field goal percentage record. She enters her senior season with a 69.1 career field goal percentage (502-of-727). The NCAA all-divisions record is held by Deneka Knowles of Division I Southeast Louisiana who shot 68.1 percent during her career.

Guards **Cortney Kettmann** and **Erin Boxleiter** return to the starting line-up. Kettmann finished third on the team and 15th in the Conference in scoring (11.8 ppg), and second on the team and eighth in the Conference in rebounding (7.7 rpg). Boxleiter was second in the Conference in three-point field goals (2.03 3-pts/game) and was fifth in team scoring (8.4 ppg).

Juniors **Amber Jones** and **Steph Begley** along with sophomore **Marissa Pollmann** contributed to last year's Championship team and will look to make a larger contribution this season. Freshmen **Blair Bennett**, **Anita Saeger**, **Jackie Sears** and **Brianne Schnedan** will also compete for playing time.

Luther College Norse
(13-12, 10-8 5th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 2/3

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 6/3

About the 2003-04 Norse: Luther will field a young team this season with as many as 11 freshmen and sophomores seeing playing time.

“We will be young but I believe we have a lot of potential,” **Jane Hildebrand**, who enters her 20th season as Luther’s head coach, said. “A lot will depend on how the young players respond to a higher level of play.”

Senior forward **Jenny Laursen** was one of three Luther players to finish among the Conference’s leading scorers last season but she is the only one back. Laursen averaged 9.7 points per game last season, 26th in the Conference. Her 85.5 percent free throw percentage ranked 12th in the nation and second in the Conference. She also ranked 14th in the IIAC in three-point field goal percentage (35.2 percent).

Returning to the starting line-up with Laursen are junior guards **Anne Bautch** and **Sarah Laposky**. Bautch finished third in the Conference last season averaging 4.56 assists per game. She also finished fifth in team scoring (7.7 ppg) and third in team rebounding (3.9 rpg). Laposky averaged 8.1 points per game (4th on team) and made 30 three-point field goals, just two behind team leader Laursen.

Sophomore forward **Rachel Jensen** appeared in all 25 games last season with one start. She averaged 5.2 points and 3.1 rebounds per game. Sophomore forward **Sarah Thimjon** (1.2 ppg, 1.8 rpg) and junior guard **Kirsten Russell** (1.4 ppg, 1.2 rpg) appeared in 22 and 13 games, respectively and will look to make a larger contribution this season.

Other returnees that saw limited action last season include junior forward **Anne Hendrickson** and sophomore guard **Kellie Close**. Among the newcomers looking to crack the Norse line-up include senior **Amy Simpson**, sophomores **Kylie Bestul** and **Larissa Peterson**, and freshmen **Michelle Allen**, **Christina Gaard**, **Stephanie Hillman**, **Danielle Heins**, **Jenny Jefferson**, **Melissa O’Brien** and **Mindy Scott**.

Simpson College Storm (21-7, 14-4 T-1st in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 2/3

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 5/7

About the 2003-04 Storm: Simpson tied for the Conference title last season, its fourth title in the last six years but the Storm lost several of their key contributors.

“We lost seven of our top-12 players from last year’s team. This season we will be a very young but athletic group,” **Brian Niemuth**, who enters his 17th season as Storm head coach, said. “I believe we have a chance to be successful but with a lesser margin of error than in the past. We definitely will be better at the end of the year than at the beginning because of our inexperience and our potential for growth.”

Senior forward **Amanda Pilcher** is the only regular starter returning from last season, starting all 28 contests. She finished third in team scoring with an 8.8 point per game average and led the team with 5.9 rebounds per game. Junior forward **Ashley Bogaards** started three contests last season but appeared in all 28 games averaging 7.6 points (5th on team) and 4.9 rebounds (2nd on team) per game.

Joining Pilcher and Bogaards are two seniors and four sophomores that saw limited action last season and will be looked to for a larger contribution this season. Senior guard **Meghan Kelso** averaged 3.8 points and 1.7 rebounds per game in 26 contests. Senior guard **Jessica Schultz** averaged 1.6 points per game and dished out 35 assists in 28 games.

Sophomore center **Kara DeNoon** averaged 3.6 points and 1.3 rebounds per game in 14 contests. Sophomore guard **Dana Johnson** averaged 1.4 points per game and handed out five assists in eight games. Sophomore forward **Kim Mehlin** and sophomore guard **Kenie Woodard** both averaged 1.0 points per game in 10 and five games, respectively.

Freshmen guards **Rachel Morrissey** and **Tiffany Smith** are both expected to see playing time.

Upper Iowa University Peacocks (5-20, 3-15 T-9th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 2/3

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 6/4

About the 2003-04 Peacocks: Upper Iowa enters its last season of Iowa Conference competition after reclassifying to NCAA Division II in September. All contests will count as non-Conference games and the Peacocks are not eligible for the IIAC Tournament.

“We have added 11 new players including five junior college transfers. I think we will get major contributions from our new players as well as some veterans that had season long injuries last season,” eighth-year head coach **Bill Wilson** said. “Even though we are unable to compete for a Championship, I know our team is motivated to have a great last season with the Iowa Conference as we make the transition to Division II.”

Senior forward **Angie Baldrige** and sophomore guard **Krystal Sherman** return to the Peacocks’ starting line-up. Baldrige averaged 16.8 points and 7.9 rebounds per game last season, leading the team in both categories and earning Second Team All-Conference honors. Sherman averaged 7.8 points and led the team with 73 assists as a freshman.

Sophomore guard **Kristen Peterson** appeared in all 25 games last season including 10 starts. She averaged 2.0 points and 1.6 rebounds per game. Sophomore forward **LaCena Jones** appeared in all 25 games last season off the bench, averaging 1.1 points and 2.1 rebounds per game.

Senior forward **Alisa Malaki** appeared in seven games with six starts. She averaged 3.9 points and 4.6 rebounds per game. Senior forward **Renee Reuter** returns to the Peacocks line-up after sitting out the 2002-03 season. In 2001-02 she appeared in 14 games and averaged 1.1 points.

The newcomers Wilson expects to contribute include juniors **Melarie Tsosie**, **Edna Cheung**, **Becky Jackson**, **Nicole Starks** and **Gloria Magana**, sophomore **Nicky Bormann**, and freshmen **T.J. Beavers**, **Courtney Brandon**, **Amber Schuster**, **Stephanie Johnson** and **Lauranda Hook**.

Wartburg College Knights (19-8, 14-4 T-1st in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 3/2

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 9/2

About the 2003-04 Knights: Wartburg will look to defend the Iowa Conference title it has either won outright or shared each of the last three seasons but the Knights' must do it without two-time Conference Most Valuable Player and two-time First Team All-Conference performer **Holly Mohs**, who graduated as the schools second all-time leading scorer.

"We will rely heavily on our six seniors who have been an important part of our success the last three seasons, but they will have to be even better this season for us to compete for the Conference Championship. We will need some of our first-year players to provide the team with depth if we are to be successful," **Monica Severson**, who enters her 16th season as Knights' head coach, said

Wartburg still has plenty of experience from those Championship teams, led by two-time All-Conference performer **Jessica Mennen**, a senior forward. She finished 16th in the Conference in scoring last season (11.7 ppg), 12th in field goal percentage (46.8 percent) and 19th in rebounding (5.1 rpg). Mennen enters the season 10th on Wartburg's all-time scoring list with 1,005 points.

Fellow seniors **Kelly Foley** and **Lisa Rasmusson** also ranked among the Conferences top-30 scorers. Foley, a forward, averaged 9.8 points per game (25th in IIAC) and shot 60.6 percent from the floor which ranked second in the Conference and was the highest single season mark in school history. She also ranked third on the team in rebounding at 4.8 per game.

Rasmussen, a guard, provides the outside scoring threat for the Knights. She connected on 24 three-pointers last season, second most on the team. She also finished second on the team with 70 assists.

Other returning veterans include seniors **Julie Medhus** (1.8 ppg, 21 assists in 26 games), **Holly Reynolds** (2.3 ppg, 2.0 rpg in 27 games) and **Lindsey Smith** (4.3 ppg, 2.8 rpg in 27 games).

Freshmen **Laura Peterson** (guard), **Jessica Kugler** (forward), **Tarah Mulder** (forward) and **Kara Dobelis** (center) hope to make an immediate impact in the Knights' line-up.