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2007 IOWA CONFERENCE SOFTBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Wartburg College, the defending Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) softball Champion and one of four IIAC schools to qualify for the NCAA Tournament, is the coaches' pick to repeat as the 2007 IIAC Champions. The Knights received five of nine first-place votes and a total of 69 points to edge Coe College, another NCAA qualifier that advanced to the national tournament. The Kohawks received three first-place votes and 66 points.

Central College, coming off its 20th NCAA Tournament appearance in the last 21 years, received the final first-place vote and is third in the IIAC Coaches' Poll with 56 points. Luther College (56 points) and Simpson College (50 points), the IIAC's fourth NCAA qualifier last year, round out the top-5. The complete 2007 IIAC softball Coaches' Poll follows.

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2006 Record
1	Wartburg (5)	69	40-7, 14-2 IIAC
2	Coe (3)	66	41-13, 13-3 IIAC
3	Central (1)	56	33-13, 12-4 IIAC
4	Luther	50	29-12, 9-7 IIAC
5	Simpson	49	29-14, 11-5 IIAC
6	Buena Vista	34	14-20, 7-9 IIAC
7	Loras	30	15-23, 4-12 IIAC
8	Cornell	24	7-24, 1-15 IIAC
9	Dubuque	18	8-32, 1-15 IIAC

National Rankings: Three Iowa Conference schools are ranked in the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Preseason Poll. Wartburg is ranked seventh, Coe is 22nd and Central is 25th. Wartburg finished 2006 ranked 8th by the NFCA and Coe was 6th in the final NFCA poll.

Conference Tournament: The Second Annual Iowa Conference softball Tournament will be played May 3-5, at Rogers Sports Complex in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Central College will serve as the host.

New Coaches: Cornell College, the University of Dubuque and Loras College each have new head coaches. **Shanda Ness** replaces interim coach Kevin Kahler at Cornell, **Corey Parr** replaces Elisha Perkins at Dubuque and **Katie Koopmann** replaces Sarah Anderson at Loras.

Ness led Gustavus Adolphus College to five straight 20-plus win seasons, a Conference Championship, and 164 wins in eight seasons as head coach. Parr spent the last three seasons as an assistant coach for the Spartan baseball team. Koopmann was an assistant coach at her alma mater for the last three years following an All-Conference playing career with the Duhawks.

Team-By-Team Preview: A brief preview for each Iowa Conference team follows.

Buena Vista University Beavers
2006 Record: 14-20 overall, 7-9 IIAC (6th)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 3/6
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 1/2

Players to Watch

Brandi Sykora, Jr., P – A two-time All-Conference performer, Sykora went 8-9 last season with a 2.15 ERA in 19 games. She threw 15 complete games (in 17 starts) and four shutouts, struck out 80 batters and held opponents to a .256 average. She ranked eighth in the IIAC in strikeouts, ninth in ERA and opponents' batting average, 11th in wins (tied) and innings pitched (110.2).

Ashley Partlow, Sr., C – Partlow hit .272 with a home run and 19 RBI last season. She slugged .340 and reached base at a .292 clip. She threw out seven would-be base stealers, seventh-most in the IIAC.

Lesley Salton, Sr., 3B – Salton struggled through a .105 season in 23 games last year but hopes to get back to her 2004 All-Conference form when she hit .294.

Amy Kamies, Sr., OF – Kamies saw action in just 17 games last season and hit .125.

Quote from head coach Marge Willadsen

"We will be a very young but hardworking team who will rely on leadership from our three seniors. The Conference race should be wide open this year."

Central College Dutch
2006 Record: 33-13 overall, 12-4 IIAC (3rd)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 6/3
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 1/1

Players to Watch

Kelly Harris, Jr., C – Harris, a two-time First Team All-Conference performer and a Second Team All-Midwest Region pick last year, hit .376 with two home runs, eight doubles, 30 RBI and 40 runs scored. She slugged .511, had a .458 on-base percentage and stole 25 bases. She led the Conference in stolen bases and throwing out would-be base stealers (21). Harris also ranked second in base on balls (20), fourth in runs scored, fifth in on-base percentage, 10th in batting average and RBI (tied), t-12th in hits (50) and 15th in slugging.

Alysha Overturf, So., CF – A First Team All-Conference and All-Midwest Region selection last year, Overturf hit a team-best .384 with 12 doubles, 31 RBI and 31 runs scored. She had a .507 slugging percentage, a .422 on-base percentage and stole 13 bases. She ranked in the Conference top-10 in doubles (4th), stolen bases (4th), batting average (7th), hits (t-7th, 53), RBI (9th), on-base percentage (10th) and runs scored (t-10th).

Tina Shimak, Sr., 1B – Shimak is a three-time All-Region performer and was a First Team All-Conference pick in 2004. Last season, she hit .357 with five home runs, 36 RBI and 11 doubles to go along with a .531 slugging percentage and a .406 on-base percentage. She finished in the Conference top-15 in RBI (6th), doubles (t-7th), home runs (t-9th), hits (t-10th, 52), on-base percentage (13th), slugging (14th) and batting average (15th).

Megan Swingen, So., P – Swingen went 13-6 with a 1.89 ERA and 93 strikeouts in 32 appearances last season. She completed six of her 15 starts, had four shutouts and combined for four others. She held opponents to a .223 average in 111 innings. She ranked seventh in the IIAC in wins, ERA, strikeouts and opponents' batting average, and 10th in innings pitched.

Quote from head coach George Wares

"We will be dealing with a very inexperienced pitching staff. We should be very good up the middle and have the ability to manufacture some runs."

Coe College Kohawks
2006 Record: 41-13 overall, 13-3 IIAC (2nd)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 5/4
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 1/1

Players to Watch

Ellie Schultz, So., P – Schultz was a First Team All-Conference and Second Team All-Midwest Region selection as a freshman, leading the Kohawks to the Division III World Series. In 44 games she posted a 28-9 record with a 1.35 ERA, five saves, eight shutouts, 29 complete games and 222 strikeouts. She held opponents to a .192 batting average. She finished second in the nation and led the IIAC in saves, and ranked third nationally and first in the IIAC in wins. She also sat atop the Conference rankings in appearances, starts (36), innings pitched (253.0) and strikeouts, and was third in ERA and opponents' batting average.

Ashley Leonard, So., SS – Leonard, a Second Team All-Conference and Third Team All-Midwest Region pick, led the Kohawks in batting with a .354 average and 57 hits. She had four home runs, 10 doubles, 22 RBI, 29 runs scored, a .503 slugging percentage, a .367 on-base percentage and a team-high 12 stolen bases. She finished in the Conference's top-10 in hits (t-3rd), stolen bases (t-5th) and doubles (t-9th); and was 14th in batting average.

Rachel Brinkman, Sr., 2B – Brinkman hit .269 in 54 games and was a perfect 10-of-10 in stolen base attempts (t-11th in IIAC). She had seven doubles, two triples and drove in 15 runs while scoring 28. She finished with a .359 slugging percentage and a .311 on-base percentage.

April Kalmes, Jr., CF – Kalmes, a First Team All-Conference pick, hit .237 with six doubles, 11 RBI and scored 26 runs. Defensively she made just two errors.

Quote from head coach Bob Timmons

"We will be very, very inexperienced this year with 13 freshmen. It will be interesting to see who out of the group comes to the top and helps add to our offense that lost four starters that hit over .300. Hitting will be a concern but hopefully some of the youngsters will rise to the top."

Cornell College Rams
2006 Record: 7-24 overall, 1-15 IIAC (t-8th)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 8/1
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 2/1

Players to Watch

Amy Carlson, Sr., P – Carlson went 4-12 last season with a 3.49 ERA and 38 strikeouts in 96.1 innings. She completed 14 of her 16 starts. She ranked 13th in the Conference in ERA and innings pitched.

Janene McCune, Sr., OF – McCune led the Rams with a .310 average, 26 hits, 11 runs scored, a .417 slugging percentage and a .383 on-base percentage in 31 games last year. She also tied for the team lead with four doubles, three stolen bases and one home run.

Brittany Raymond, Jr., C – Raymond hit .168 with four doubles, five RBI and three stolen bases last year.

University of Dubuque Spartans
2006 Record: 8-32 overall, 1-15 IIAC (t-8th)

Players to Watch

Ashley Harrow, Sr., P – Harrow posted a 5-16 record with a 3.77 ERA, 12 complete games, two shutouts and 75 strikeouts in 128 innings over 26 games. She finished sixth in the IIAC in innings pitched, t-11th in strikeouts, and 14th in ERA and opponents' batting average (.297).

Brooke Russell, Sr., C – Russell hit .146 in 40 games last year. She threw out seven would-be base stealers, which tied for seventh in the Conference.

Amanda Schultz, Jr., SS – Schultz hit .290 last season with a .411 slugging percentage and a .384 on-base percentage. She led the Spartans with 15 runs scored, 15 walks and 11 stolen bases (tied). She tied for seventh in the Conference in stolen bases and eighth in walks.

Quote from head coach Corey Parr

"It's no secret that we are a young team. But I'm not worried at all that I have to start so many freshmen. I know that those girls want to be out there and are going to work day-in-and-day-out. Plus, the three returners I have want to get that taste of last season out of their mouths, and they're going to lead them (freshmen) throughout the season. This group has really gelled and I'm excited to see what we can do."

Loras College Duhawks

2006 Record: 15-23 overall, 4-12 IIAC (7th)

Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 6/2

Pitchers Returning/Lost: 1/2

Players to Watch

Stacy Bahl, Jr., 1B – A First Team All-Conference pick last season, Bahl led the Duhawks and ranked sixth in the Conference with a .398 batting average. She hit three home runs and drove in 28 runs, had a .540 slugging percentage and a .485 on-base percentage, which led the Conference.

Jamie Wendt, Jr., DP/3B – Wendt, a Second Team All-Conference selection, hit .346 last season which tied for second on the team. She tied for the team lead with eight home runs, which was fifth in the Conference, and tied for second on the team with 26 RBI. She slugged .587 (2nd on team) and had a .382 on-base percentage (3rd on team).

Megan Bosso, Sr., OF – Bosso hit .341 with 12 RBI, three doubles, 20 runs scored, a .364 slugging percentage and a .367 on-base percentage. She stole 10-of-11 bases (t-11th in IIAC) and did not commit an error in 43 chances.

Quote from head coach Katie Koopmann

"The Loras College Softball team is excited to have some key players returning to the line-up. We will use our veteran leadership to compete in a tough Conference."

Luther College Norse
2006 Record: 29-12 overall, 9-7 IIAC (5th)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 7/2
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 4/1

Players to Watch

Becki Buls, Sr., P – Buls earned First Team All-Conference and Third Team All-Midwest Region honors last season after posting a 17-5 record with a 1.14 ERA, 109 strikeouts, 13 complete games and six shutouts in 23 appearances (21 starts). She held opponents to a .172 average in 123.0 innings. She led the Conference in opponents' batting average and was second in ERA; also ranking in the top-10 in wins (t-5th), strikeouts (6th) and innings pitched (7th).

Lisa Huinker, Sr., SS – Huinker, a Second Team All-Conference and All-Midwest Region selection last year, moves from second base to short stop this season. A year ago she hit .417 with 12 home runs, 10 doubles, 58 RBI, had a .795 slugging percentage and a .451 on-base percentage. She led the Conference in RBI, and was second in home runs and slugging percentage. She also finished among the top-10 in batting average (4th), on-base percentage (6th), hits (t-7th, 53), runs scored (8th, 35) and doubles (t-9th).

Erin Michael, Sr., LF – Michael is a three-time All-Conference and two-time All-Region performer. She hit .347 with four home runs, 11 doubles, 25 RBI, had a .554 slugging percentage and a .437 on-base percentage last season. She ranked among the Conference leaders in base on balls (t-6th, 17), doubles (t-7th), on-base percentage (8th) and slugging percentage (12th)

Christina Gaard, Sr., CF – Gaard was a Third Team All-Midwest Region pick last season and will join the team following the conclusion of the Luther women's basketball season. Last season she hit .379, scored 30 runs, had 13 RBI, a .476 slugging percentage and a .417 on-base percentage. She finished among the Conference's top-15 in batting average (9th), on-base percentage (11th), runs scored (t-13th) and hits (15th, 47).

Quote from head coach Renae Hartl

"Having experienced players back at key positions will help our team out in the beginning. I am excited to see how the Conference spreads out this year with four returning teams with recent post-season experience. We hope to be in the mix come early May."

Simpson College Storm
2006 Record: 29-14 overall, 11-5 IIAC (4th)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 7/2
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 1/1

Players to Watch

Calie Hohneke, Jr., P – A two-time All-Conference selection, Hohneke went 10-7 with a 1.91 ERA, 79 strikeouts, 12 complete games and three shutouts in 22 games (21 starts). She ranked eighth in the IIAC in wins, ERA and opponents' batting average (.252), and was ninth in innings pitched (113.2) and strikeouts. In limited at-bats (36), she hit .361 and drove in six runs.

Jill Mitchell, Sr., C – Mitchell led the Storm with a .302 batting average, 21 RBI, a .411 slugging percentage and a .352 on-base percentage. She also tied for the team lead with three home runs, ranked second in hits (39).

Jacey Stephens, Sr., 1B – Stephens hit .281 with three home runs, eight doubles, 16 RBI, a .407 slugging percentage and a .317 on-base percentage. Defensively, she made just three errors in 321 chances for a .991 fielding percentage, second among IIAC regular first basemen.

Allison Erichsen, Sr., 2B – Erichsen, a 2005 All-Midwest Region pick, hit .286 last year with a home run, six doubles, 17 RBI, a .353 slugging percentage and a .321 on-base percentage. During her All-Region season, she hit .336.

Quote from head coach Henry Christowski

"Our squad will be built around a strong group of four seniors and two juniors with a number of underclassmen competing for the other three positions. A number of talented freshmen could have an impact on our overall success."

Wartburg College Knights

2006 Record: 40-7 overall, 14-2 IIAC (1st)

Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 7/2

Pitchers Returning/Lost: 2/1

Players to Watch

Stephanie Howe, Sr., 2B – A two-time First Team All-Conference pick and a three-time All-Midwest Region selection, Howe ranked first or second in the Conference last season in most offensive categories. She led the IIAC in slugging percentage (.808), runs scored (47), home runs (13) and total bases (126). She finished second in batting average (.429), on-base percentage (.483), hits (67), RBI (56) and doubles (tied, 16).

Ashley Rogers, Jr., 1B – Rogers, a two-time All-Conference selection, hit .308 with five home runs, 32 RBI, 39 runs scored, a .500 slugging percentage and a .448 on-base percentage. She led the Conference with 34 base on balls, ranked fifth in runs scored, seventh in on-base percentage and tied for seventh in RBI.

Angela Hartwig, So., P – Hartwig, pitching in the shadows of Conference MVP Jackie Sorensen, posted a 19-2 record with two saves, a 1.82 ERA, 151 strikeouts, 12 complete games and four shutouts in 27 games (20 starts). She held opponents to a .211 average in 119.0 innings. Hartwig finished in the Conference's top-10 in wins (3rd), strikeouts (4th), saves (4th), opponents' batting average (5th), ERA (6th), appearances (7th), innings pitched (8th) and starts (t-8th).

Quote from head coach Kara Kehe

"We are excited about the 2007 season. With steady progress both offensively and defensively in the weeks ahead, we have the potential to come together and achieve our goals."

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