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2006 IOWA CONFERENCE VOLLEYBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Ten-time defending Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) volleyball Champion, Central College, is again the coaches' pick to win the 2006 IIAC title. The Dutch received five first-place votes and three second-place votes, totaling 69 points in the IIAC volleyball Coaches' Poll.

Wartburg College garnered three first-place votes, four second-place votes and one third-place vote, totaled 66 points and is second in the Poll. Simpson College received the remaining first-vote and is third in the preseason poll with 58 points. The complete 2006 IIAC volleyball Coaches' Poll follows.

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2005 Record
1	Central (5)	69	26-10, 8-0 IIAC
2	Wartburg (3)	66	20-14, 7-1 IIAC
3	Simpson (1)	58	21-14, 4-4 IIAC
4	Buena Vista	46	17-15, 5-3 IIAC
5	Coe	42	19-17, 4-4 IIAC
6	Cornell	37	13-22, 4-4 IIAC
7	Dubuque	34	19-15, 3-5 IIAC
8	Loras	25	9-21, 0-8 IIAC
9	Luther	19	3-29, 1-7 IIAC

New Coaches: **DeAnn Woodin** and **Teresa Kehe** are the new coaches at Coe and Loras, respectively. Woodin spent the past year as Director of Volleyball Operations at the University of Iowa and led Kirkwood Community College to its first ever NJCAA Division II National Championship in 2003. She replaces Heather Schmidt.

Kehe won 579 matches, six state Championships and 14 Conference titles in 23 years as head coach at Tripoli High School. She replaces Brian Meeter.

Conference Tournament: The top-six teams following the regular season round-robin schedule qualify for the 2006 Iowa Conference Tournament with an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament on the line. The IIAC Tournament is November 3-4, hosted by the top seed.

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

Buena Vista returns four starters and seven letterwinners from last season's 17-15 team that finished third in the Conference with a 5-3 record. Last season the Beavers recorded the most wins in a season since posting a 17-13 record in 1986 and recorded its first above-.500 Conference mark since posting a 10-6 mark in 1986. Senior right-side hitter **Kristen Staiert** was a First Team All-Conference selection last year after finishing third in the Conference with a .288 hitting percentage and seventh with a 3.21 kill per game average. She also averaged 2.82 digs per game and had a team-high 32 service aces. Sophomore setter **Molly Reuter** finished second in the Conference with 11.30 assists per game to go along with 2.92 digs per game and tied Staiert for the team lead with 32 aces. Senior outside hitter **Ashley Wilde** finished 10th in the Conference with 2.98 kills per game and also averaged 2.17 digs. Junior libero **Jessica Wilcox** was second in the Conference with 5.05 digs per game.

Buena Vista head coach **Lindsey Kruse** says, "BVU volleyball has been getting stronger every season the past several years. I have a great group of kids returning who are excited to keep the program going in the right direction."

Central returns five starters and 10 letterwinners from last season's 26-10 team that finished first in the Conference with an 8-0 record, its eighth unbeaten Conference season in the last nine years. For the second straight year, the Dutch will be faced with replacing an Iowa Conference MVP at middle hitter. Central does return three All-Conference performers from 2005, including two-time All-Conference pick **Tessa Prati**, a senior right side hitter. Prati averaged at team-high 2.55 kills per game while hitting .230. She was third on the team with 71 blocks. Junior middle hitter **Katie Johnson**, a First Team All-Conference pick last year, finished second in the Conference with a .305 hitting percentage, averaging 2.25 kills per game. She finished 10th in the IIAC with a 0.85 block per game average. Junior setter **Terri Berger**, a Second Team All-Conference pick last year, was the only IIAC player in the top-10 in hitting percentage (7th, .263), assists (5th, 9.39/game) and service aces (9th, 0.39/game). Sophomore libero **Maggie Nowicki**, finished second on the team with 40 service aces and was fourth in the Iowa Conference with 0.44 aces per game. She also finished third in the IIAC with a 4.88 dig per game average.

Central head coach **Kent Clayberg** says, "Central volleyball is looking forward to another great year. We lost some excellent players and quality individuals to graduation, but feel great about the talent and character of the young women returning. They've put in extraordinary effort and hard work, and are ready to seize their opportunity to rise to the occasion of varsity-level competition. We will be bolstered again by a strong freshmen class that looks to push for an immediate impact."

Coe returns five starters and six letterwinners from last season's 19-17 team that finished tied for fourth in the Conference with a 4-4 record and reached the Conference Tournament semifinals for the first time since joining the IIAC in 1997. Junior middle blocker **Emily Ita** and outside hitter **Shanon Nelson** earned All-Conference honors last season. Ita finished fourth in the Conference with 1.04 blocks per game. She also ranked second on the Kohawks with a .240 hitting percentage and 39 service aces, and third with 2.55 kills per game. Nelson was sixth in the IIAC with a .274 hitting percentage and ninth in the Conference with 3.00 kills per game. Senior outside hitter **Rachel Schmidt** finished second in the Conference with 0.48 service aces per game, while averaging 2.38 kills and 2.57 digs per game and hitting .205. Junior setter **Kristy Upah** set the school record with 1,216 assists last season. Her 9.50 assist per game average was fourth in the Conference.

Coe head coach **DeAnn Woodin** says, "I'm looking forward to rebuilding what these upperclassman have started...becoming a nationally competitive volleyball program. We lost just one senior [Heather Noll, Second Team All-Conference], but have a strong group of seniors and juniors who are ready to take this program to the next level. This group had a taste of the IIAC Tournament semifinals, so they are looking forward to improving their finish. It's a very competitive conference with a lot of talented players, so there are going to be some tough battles as usual."

Cornell returns five starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 13-22 team that finished tied for fourth in the Conference with a 4-4 record. Last season marked the fourth straight 12-plus win season for the Rams, the first time they accomplished that feat since 1987-90. Sophomore middle hitter **Tiffany Cowan** set the school record with 124 blocks as a freshman. Her 0.95 block per game average ranked eighth in the Conference. She also ranked fourth on the team with 2.08 kills per game. Junior middle/right-side hitter **Jessica Preiss** led the team with 52 service aces and ranked sixth in the IIAC with a 0.44 ace per game average. She was also third on the team with 90 blocks and fifth with 1.82 kills per game. Junior setter **Hope Coffin** finished seventh in the Conference in assists (6.27/game) and was second on the Rams with 38 service aces. Senior middle/outside hitter **Michelle Ditch** is a three-year starter and the team's top returning hitter with a .186 hitting percentage. Her 275 kills were tied for the team lead and her 71 blocks were third.

Cornell head coach **Jeff Meeker** says, "We are looking to be much improved from last season's campaign. With five returning starters and a talented group of newcomers our expectations are high. I see Iowa Conference volleyball taking a big step forward this fall and believe that the race for championship will be extremely competitive."

Dubuque returns six starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 19-15 team that finished seventh in the Conference with a 3-5 record. Dubuque led the Iowa Conference in most offensive categories including hitting percentage, assists, kills, and blocks thanks in large part to the quartet of setter **J Browning**, outside hitters **Jody Klepinger** and **Jena Goedken**, and libero **Abbie Hillard**. Browning, an All-Conference performer three years ago as a freshman, led the Conference and ranked 10th nationally with a 12.56 assist per game average in 2005. She also had the fourth-best hitting percentage (.276 in 257 total attacks) and dig per game average (2.66) on the team. Goedken ranked fourth in the Conference with a .290 hitting percentage and fifth with a 3.37 kill per game average. She also averaged 2.32 digs per game. Klepinger averaged 3.31 kills per game (6th in the Conference) with a team-high 1,041 total attacks, and 1.97 digs per game. Hillard averaged a team-best 4.42 digs per game, fourth in the Conference.

Dubuque head coach **Cole Tallman** says, "The University of Dubuque volleyball team will always have the same annual aspiration, to impact NCAA Division III volleyball at the regional and national levels. We return five seniors and experienced underclassmen. We must do a better job 'stopping' other teams instead of trying to outscore everyone. Otherwise, 2006 will be another season of the Spartans 'keeping both teams in the game at the same time.'"

Loras returns five starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 9-21 team that finished ninth in the Conference with an 0-8 record. Senior outside hitter **Kate Sievers** led the Conference with a 0.53 service ace per game average and finished third with a 3.46 kill per game average. She was the Duhawks second-leading hitter with a .194 hitting percentage. Junior setter **Erica Richman** finished 10th in the IIAC with a 5.11 assist per game average. Sophomore outside hitter **Betsy Neverman** led the team with 87 blocks and was third in hitting (.183). Junior middle blocker **Jenna Kollasch** finished second on the team with 59 blocks, third with 227 kills and fourth with a .155 hitting percentage.

Loras head coach **Teresa Kehe** says, "The 2006 Loras volleyball team will be seeking to improve upon its 0-8 record last season by building team morale, creating a fun and enthusiastic atmosphere, and striving to develop a winning mindset in order to strengthen their commitment, gain a stronger work ethic and improve their court skills."

Luther returns four starters and 10 letterwinners from last season's 3-29 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 1-7 record. A sophomore and junior laden team, the Norse will be led by junior outside hitters **Abby Lahr** and **Leah Sikora**, and junior libero **Chandra Skinner**. Lahr led the team with 279 kills and a .226 hitting percentage. She also averaged 1.16 digs per game. Sikora led the team with 38 service aces, ranked second with 250 kills and third with 187 digs. Skinner led the team with 327 digs.

Luther head coach **Gwen Van Gerpen** says, "With a large number of returning letterwinners and a strong incoming freshman class, Luther is looking forward to making strides in the Iowa Conference."

Simpson returns five starters and five letterwinners from last season's 21-14 team that finished tied for fourth in the Conference with a 4-4 record and reached the Championship match of the Conference Tournament. A trio of hitters will lead the Storm in hopes of returning to the title match – senior middle hitter **Jessica Martin**, senior outside hitter **Tiffany Everding** and sophomore middle hitter **Jayna Fischbach**. Martin and Everding were All-Conference selections last year. Martin finished fourth in the Conference in kills and ninth in hitting percentage with a 3.43 kill per game average and a .245 hitting percentage. She ranked second on the Storm 110 blocks and third with a 2.31 dig per game average. Everding finished second on the team with 2.79 kills per game, a .216 hitting percentage and 2.99 digs per game. Fischbach had a team-high 61 service aces, ranking fifth in the Conference with a 0.44 ace per game average. She also led the team with 117 blocks.

Simpson head coach **Lana Smith** says, "We have a small core of experienced performers returning, but will be complimented by some newcomers that have the potential to make positive impacts on our overall performance. Our competitive schedule will test our experience and make us better. We hope to improve our team play each match as we build momentum into the Iowa Conference Championship."

Wartburg returns six starters and 10 letterwinners from last season's 20-14 team that finished second in the Conference with a 7-1 record, its ninth top-three Conference finish in the last 10 years. Among the Knights top returnees are a three-time All-Conference middle hitter (senior **Sheena Treanor**), a two-time All-Conference and honorable mention All-American middle hitter (junior **Ashley Rogers**), an All-Conference libero (junior **Ashley Steines**) and an outside hitter that made significant contributions as a freshman (sophomore **Kelsey Steffens**). Rogers led the IIAC in kills per game (3.83) and blocks per game (1.33) and ranked 10th with 3.28 digs per game. Steines averaged a Conference-best 5.94 digs per game. Treanor had a team-best .230 hitting percentage and was seventh in the Conference with 0.96 blocks per game. Steffens was second on the team in hitting (.213) and kills per game (2.89).

Wartburg head coach **Jennifer Walker** says, "We look for this to be another strong season for Wartburg volleyball. We have a solid core of experienced players returning which will provide quality leadership for our younger athletes. We will continue to stress the importance of our defense and look to our offense to be explosive and balanced. This is a team that will definitely get stronger as the season goes on. Just like our team, many of the teams in the IIAC will have experienced squads. This season should be a competitive one from start to finish. We'll have to be ready every night we step on the floor."