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2006-07 IOWA CONFERENCE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Defending Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) women's basketball Champion, Simpson College, and runner-up, Luther College, each received four first-place votes in the 2006-07 IIAC women's basketball Coaches' Poll. Luther received three second-place votes to Simpson's two and earned the top spot in the preseason poll with 60 points. Simpson sits second with 59 points.

Buena Vista University is third in the Poll with 50 points followed by Loras College with 44 points. Cornell College, just two years removed from a winless season, is picked fifth by the Conference coaches. The complete 2006-07 IIAC women's basketball Coaches' Poll follows.

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2005-06 Record
1	Luther (4)	60	21-5, 13-3 IIAC
2	Simpson (4)	59	24-5, 15-1 IIAC
3	Buena Vista	50	17-10, 11-5 IIAC
4	Loras	44	12-15, 9-7 IIAC
5	Cornell	34	7-19, 5-11 IIAC
6	Wartburg	30	7-17, 4-12 IIAC
7	Coe	28	8-18, 6-10 IIAC
8	Dubuque	23	10-15, 4-12 IIAC
9	Central	20	5-18, 5-11 IIAC

Preseason Polls: Simpson is ranked 22nd in the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) and 24th in the Women's DIII News preseason polls. The Storm are also listed among those receiving votes in the d3hoops.com preseason poll.

New Coaches: Coe College and Wartburg College each have new coaches patrolling the sidelines. **Randi Peterson**, a former All-Big Ten performer at the University of Iowa, replaces **Melissa Bruner** at Coe. Prior to her arrival at Coe, Peterson spent the last three seasons at the University of Minnesota-Morris including the 2005-06 season as its head coach leading the Cougars to a 16-10 record and earning UMAC Coach of the Year honors.

Bob Amsberry, former head coach at Rockford College, replaces **Monica Severson**, the all-time winningest women's basketball coach at Wartburg. Amsberry took over a Rockford team in 1997 that was in the midst of a national-record 70-game losing streak. Within three years, the Regents posted an 18-8 record.

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

Buena Vista returns two starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 17-10 team that finished third in the Conference with an 11-5 record. The Beavers graduated the Conference's top-two scorers from a year ago in two-time Conference MVP and four-time All-Conference performer Katie Maguire and two-time First Team All-Conference performer Kelli Staley. Senior guards **Tracy Hartwig** and **Lindsey Meyer** will be asked to lead a team that has won 88 games in the last four years. Hartwig was the team's fourth-leading scorer last year with a 9.3 point per game average, 21st in the Conference. She also averaged 3.9 rebounds, 2.67 assists and 1.63 3-pointers per game, and shot 41.9 percent on 3-pointers. She ranked fourth in the Conference in 3-point field

goal percentage, 7th in 3-point field goals made and 11th in assists. Meyer averaged 5.7 points per game and led the Conference shooting 44.2 percent on 3-pointers primarily coming off the Buena Vista bench.

Buena Vista head coach **Janet Berry** says, "We have a lot of new faces in our program so it might take a while to figure out how we all fit. We hope to continue to score points but feel we need to improve defensively to be competitive in the IIAC."

Central returns four starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 5-18 team that finished tied for sixth in the Conference with a 5-11 record. The Dutch went 5-6 at home last year but were winless in 11 road contests with two freshmen and a sophomore in the starting line-up. Guard **Laura Porter** averaged 11.0 points per game last year, second on the team and 13th in the Conference. She also had a team-high 98 assists and 39 steals, averaging 4.26 assists and 1.70 steals per game, ranking fourth and 15th respectively. Forward **Emily DeJong** averaged 9.2 points and 7.3 rebounds per game as a freshman, ranking 23rd in the IIAC in scoring, third in rebounding and third in 3-point field goal percentage (42.3 percent). She was also among Conference leaders in field goal percentage (15th, 43.3 percent), 3-point field goals made (8th, 1.43/game) and blocked shots (14th, 0.52/game). Guard **Morgan Martin** averaged 6.9 points, 2.3 rebounds and 1.39 assists per game.

Central head coach **Natalie Nakic** says, "We're a relatively young team, but are returning four starters. We're still going through a transition phase."

Coe returns three starters and six letterwinners from last season's 8-18 team that finished fifth in the Conference with a 6-10 record. The Kohawks are coming off back-to-back fifth-place Conference finishes. With three starters and three of their top-four scorers back from a year ago, they hope to move up the ladder. Guard/forward **Amber Karkosh** was a First Team All-Conference performer after averaging 14.8 points, 5.1 rebounds and 1.9 assists per game. She was fourth in the Conference in scoring, 16th in rebounding, second in free throw percentage (78.7 percent), ninth in field goal percentage (46.3 percent) and 12th in steals per game (1.84). Center **Shanon Nelson** averaged 6.0 points and 5.1 rebounds per game all off the bench last year. She was third in team scoring and tied for second in rebounding. Guard **Amber Lindeman** averaged 4.2 points and 4.3 rebounds per game and had a team-high 66 assists (2.54 per game which ranked 12th in IIAC).

Coe head coach **Randi Peterson** says, "It has been an exciting time for me to get back to Iowa and introduced to the Iowa Conference. Our basketball team has been working hard in these first few weeks of practice. I look forward to the energy and teamwork they will put together on the floor come Conference time. Being new to the IIAC, I feel our team has nowhere to look but up."

Cornell returns four starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 7-19 team that finished tied for sixth in the Conference with a 5-11 record. The Rams made a seven game turnaround from 2004-05 to 2005-06 with three freshmen in their starting line-up. Guard **Anna Skaggs** is the lone returning senior to the Cornell line-up this year. A Second Team All-Conference performer last year, she was the team's top scorer with a 13.3 point per game average, sixth in the Conference. She also ranked among Conference leaders with a 4.7 rebound per game average (18th in IIAC) and a 72.6 percent free throw percentage (9th).

Cornell head coach **Brent Brase** says, "[We are] working hard to instill the mental and physical toughness necessary to compete at our best all the time."

Dubuque returns four starters and six letterwinners from last season's 10-15 team that finished tied for eighth in the Conference with a 4-12 record. The Spartans will be led by point guard **Courtney Musser**, a two-time All-Conference selection. She was second in the IIAC last year with 5.77 assists per game, 19th in scoring with 9.9 points per game and eighth in free throw percentage (74.7 percent). Shooting guard **Brittney Dickey** led Dubuque in scoring and ranked 11th in the IIAC with an 11.2 point per game average and ranked 15th in assists (2.28 per game). Forward **Jennifer Bell** ranked among the Conference leaders in rebounding (6th, 7.1/game), scoring (26th, 8.0 points/game), blocked shots (t-2nd, 1.44/game) and field goal percentage (3rd, 51.3 percent).

Dubuque head coach **Todd Huffman** says, "The 2006-07 Spartan women's basketball team will be an improved and deeper team than in past seasons. We have a solid blend of experience and youth that will help lead us through the always tough IIAC."

Loras returns four starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 12-15 team that finished fourth in the Conference with a 9-7 record. All-Conference guards **Natalie Pucci** and **Blair Bennett** lead the Duhawk returnees. Pucci is the top returning scorer in the Conference, finishing third overall last year with a 16.7 point per game average. She finished second in the IIAC in 3-point field goals made (2.52/game), 5th in free throw percentage (77.6 percent), 10th in 3-point field goal percentage (38.4 percent), 11th in field goal percentage (43.8 percent), 14th in assists (2.30/game) and 15th in blocked shots (0.52/game). Bennett averaged 11.3 points, 3.33 assists and 5.8 rebounds per game, ranking sixth in the Conference in assists, and 10th in scoring and rebounding. She was also among the Conference leaders in free throw percentage (7th, 75.3 percent), steals (13th, 1.74/game) and 3-point field goals (11th, 1.33/game).

Loras head coach **Shauna Green** says, "With several experienced players returning we will look to them to guide this year's team. We have also added some much needed depth with our incoming class. This is a very motivated group who is ready to work extremely hard to get better everyday and to get ready to compete in the Iowa Conference."

Luther returns three starters and 10 letterwinners from last season's 21-5 team that finished second in the Conference with a 13-3 record. The Norse return two All-Conference guards and its top backcourt player off the bench from last year's team. **Christina Gaard** and **Danielle Dunwald**, First and Second Team All-Conference selections, respectively, and **Melissa O'Brien** were three of the top four scorers for Luther last year. Gaard was second in team scoring, 14th in the Conference, with a 10.9 point per game average. She also finished fifth in the IIAC with a 3.46 assist per game average and fourth with a 2.54 steal per game average. Dunwald led the Conference with nearly four steals per game (3.96) and was eighth in assists per game (3.0) while averaging 7.7 points and 4.3 rebounds. O'Brien came off the bench in all 25 games she appeared, averaging 10.1 points per game (18th in IIAC) and 2.16 assists per game. She tied for third in the IIAC averaging 2.32 3-point field goals per game and was fifth connecting on 40.3 percent of her 3-point field goals, slightly ahead of Gaard.

Luther head coach **Jane Hildebrand** says, "We are excited about the upcoming season. There will be a different look with the loss of interior players Anne Straate, Erica Svien and Rachel Jensen. Several players are ready to step up and fill the void. They have worked hard in the off-season and it should make for an interesting year. We will continue to play an up tempo game and take advantage of the team's depth. Simpson, as returning Conference champions, is the favorite to repeat. However, I think there will be several teams challenging them for the top spot and we expect to be one of them. I believe the Conference will be more competitive top to bottom this season."

Simpson returns three starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 24-5 team that won its fifth Iowa Conference Championship with a 15-1 Conference record. The Storm made it to the second round of the NCAA Tournament last year for the first time in school history and return All-Conference forward **Katelyn Whiton**, center **Ashley Katch** and guard **Tessa Van Oosbree** to the starting line-up. Whiton led the team in scoring and rebounding, averaging 12.9 points and 6.5 rebounds per game which ranked seventh and eighth in the IIAC, respectively. She shot 49.1 percent from the floor (7th in IIAC) and averaged 2.03 steals per game (8th in IIAC). Katch was the Conference's top shot blocker, averaging 3.14 blocks per game, more than double the #2 shot blocker. She averaged 4.8 rebounds per game (17th in IIAC) and 6.7 points per game. Van Oosbree contributed 7.3 points, 4.3 rebounds and 1.72 steals per game, ranking 30th in scoring and 14th in steals.

Simpson head coach **Brian Niemuth** says, "I feel like Simpson College has a chance to be competitive again but we will be very young. Our young players are going to have to grow up in a hurry. We will definitely be better at the end of the year after gaining some experience. We are looking forward to the challenges ahead of us. It should be a very balanced and competitive Conference race this year."

Wartburg returns five starters and 10 letterwinners from last season's 7-17 team that finished tied for eighth in the Conference with a 4-12 record. The Knights struggled through their first sub-.500 season since 1994-95 and look to get back on their winning ways behind All-Conference forward **Elizabeth Campbell** and center **Megan Hendricks**, the team's top-two scorers and rebounders from last season. Campbell averaged 12.7 points per game which was eighth in the IIAC while Hendricks' 11.7 point per game average was ninth. Campbell was seventh in the Conference with 6.7 rebounds per contest and Hendricks was ninth with 6.4 rebounds per game. Hendricks ranked 10th in field goal percentage at 45.6 percent and Campbell was 12th in free throw percentage at 65.4 percent.

Wartburg head coach **Bob Amsberry** says, "Our focus early on is to get better every single day and that will be critical to our success later in the season. Our short-term challenges are for our players to learn our system and to play unselfishly and efficiently within that system. We will work hard to play to our strengths and to manage our deficiencies. If we are able to do that and compete hard for 40 minutes every night, we will be successful."

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