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2007 IOWA CONFERENCE VOLLEYBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Coe College, which finished third in the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) volleyball standings in 2006, is the coaches' pick to win the 2007 IIAC title. The Kohawks received seven first-place votes and a third-place vote, totaling 70 points in the IIAC volleyball Coaches' Poll.

Central College, which has won or shared each of the past 11 IIAC volleyball titles, garnered one first-place vote, five second-place votes, a third-place vote, and a fourth-place vote for a second-place total of 62 points. Simpson College received the remaining first-place vote and is third in the preseason poll with 58 points. The complete 2007 IIAC volleyball Coaches' Poll follows.

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2006 Record
1	Coe (7)	70	26-8, 5-3 IIAC
2	Central (1)	62	24-10, 6-2 IIAC
3	Simpson (1)	58	27-11, 6-2 IIAC
4	Wartburg	50	17-19, 5-3 IIAC
T5	Buena Vista	38	16-17, 5-3 IIAC
T5	Loras	38	18-18, 4-4 IIAC
7	Dubuque	36	21-14, 3-5 IIAC
8	Cornell	26	16-16, 2-6 IIAC
9	Luther	18	3-27, 0-8 IIAC

New Coaches: **Jane Gibbs** is the new coach at Luther. Gibbs spent last season as top assistant coach at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls following two seasons as the head assistant coach at NCAA I Gardner-Webb University. She replaces Gwen Van Gerpen.

Conference Tournament: The top-six teams following the regular season round-robin schedule qualify for the 2007 Iowa Conference Tournament with an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament on the line. The IIAC Tournament is November 2-3, hosted by the top seed.

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

Buena Vista returns four starters and six letterwinners from last season's 16-17 team that finished tied for third in the Conference with a 5-3 record. The Beavers will be led by sophomore middle blocker **Kelli Luitjens**. Luitjens finished last season as the team leader in blocks with 87. She was also third on the team in attack percentage (.225) and kills (246). Senior defensive specialist **Jessica Wilcox** finished fourth in the Conference in digs at 5.02 per game. Junior setter **Molly Reuter** led the team with 11.10 assists per game, a figure that ranked fourth in the league. Reuter also ranked third on the team in service aces (20) and fourth in digs (375). Senior defensive specialist/outside hitter **Betsy Behrens** ranked second on the team with 456 digs, averaging 3.86 per game, and fourth on the team with 22 assists.

Buena Vista head coach **Lindsey Kruse** says, "Heading into the 2007 season we will have some very big shoes to fill. However, I still feel that we have enough competition on our squad to remain competitive in the conference."

Central returns five starters and 10 letterwinners from last season's 24-10 team that finished tied for first in the Conference with a 6-2 record, giving the Dutch a share of its eleventh consecutive Conference title. Senior setter **Terri Berger**, a First Team All-Conference pick last year, placed in the top-10 in both assists (sixth, 10.45/game) and service aces (fifth, 0.53/game). Senior middle hitter **Katie Johnson**, a Second Team All-Conference pick last year, finished fifth in the Conference with a .273 hitting percentage, averaging 2.75 kills per game. She finished second in the IIAC with a 1.37 block per game average. Junior libero **Maggie Nowicki** led the team with 517 digs, an average of 4.54 per game to rank seventh among Iowa Conference players. She also tied for third on the team with 37 service aces. Junior outside hitter **Miranda Kouba** was second on the team in digs with 3.42 per game while averaging 1.78 kills. Senior **Whitney Taylor** appeared in 106 games in a variety of roles last year and could split time between setter and right-side hitter.

Central head coach **Kent Clayberg** says, "We anticipate an intense, competitive Central squad that will feed on the leadership and passion of a very large senior class. We feel like we have quality depth at virtually every position creating an exciting training culture that should help us progress throughout the length of the season. The conference will be as strong and balanced as ever. Every team will be well trained and well prepared. It should be a very fun season. "

Coe returns four starters and five letterwinners from last season's 26-8 team that finished tied for third in the Conference with a 5-3 record. Senior setter **Kristy Upah** earned First Team All-Conference honors last season after crushing her own school record for assists with 1,589. Her 12.51 assists per game average ranked second in the IIAC and 10th in Division III. Senior outside hitters **Shanon Nelson** and **Nicole Spree** also earned All-Conference honors in 2006. Nelson ranked ninth in the Conference with a team-high .263 attack percentage. She was also second on the team in blocks with 87 and fourth in kills with 336. Spree led the Kohawks in kills per game at 3.47, a mark that also ranked seventh in the Conference. Her .232 attack percentage ranked second on the team, while her 386 digs ranked third. Senior middle hitter **Emily Ita**, an All-Conference selection in 2005, ranked third in the IIAC with a team-leading 132 blocks, an average of 1.04 blocks per game. Ita also ranked second on the team with 372 kills and third on the team in kills per game with 2.93.

Coe head coach **DeAnn Woodin** says, "As always, the conference title will be up for grabs, as there are several teams with not only fantastic upperclassmen or returners but also some talented newcomers. It will be another exciting year, and I know every team will be up for the challenge."

Cornell returns four starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 16-16 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 2-8 record. The Rams will be led up front by sophomores **Laura Dudgeon** and **Kristin Paczosa** and junior **Tiffany Cowan**. Dudgeon, a middle hitter, finished eighth in the Conference in hitting percentage (.264) and tenth in blocks (0.83/game). She also led the team in kills with 348. Paczosa, an outside hitter, tallied 205 kills to finish third on the team. Cowan, a middle hitter, ranked seventh in the league in blocks (0.92/game). Her team-high 105 blocks in 2006 pushed her career total to 229 and into third place all-time at Cornell. She also ranked second on the team in kills (342). A pair of seniors will provide significant court leadership. Setter **Hope Coffin** finished sixth in the IIAC in service aces (0.49/game) and ninth in assists (8.41/game). Coffin topped the 1,000 assist mark for the second time in her career in 2006 (1,001) and became Cornell's career leader in the category midway through the season. She enters her final collegiate season with 2,755 assists. Libero **Amber Hein** ranked second in the Conference in digs (5.48/game).

Cornell head coach **Jeff Meeker** says, "I anticipate another great year of IIAC volleyball. Top to bottom I believe the conference will as be stronger than ever, and we are looking forward to the challenge. With most of our starting group returning and good group of new players joining us, we are anxious to start the season. Our 2007 squad will be our most experienced team in years; our additional depth and improved offense will help us take a big step forward this fall."

Dubuque returns four starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 21-14 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 for the second consecutive season. The Spartans also ranked in the top-10 in NCAA Division III in attack percentage (fifth, .294), kills per game (fifth, 15.84), and assists per game (ninth, 14.09). Senior middle blocker **Jena Goedken**, a Second Team All-Conference selection last season, will be counted on to repeat a junior season where she led the Iowa Conference in kills (652), attack percentage (.454), services aces (87) and blocks per game (1.57). Goedken's marks in kills, attack percentage and block assists (156) were all new Dubuque school records and she ranked in the top ten in NCAA Division III in attack percentage (3rd) and kills per game (10th, 5.34). Joining Goedken up front will be outside hitter **Jayme Kalb** and middle blocker **Katelyn Hermann**, both sophomores. Kalb was second in the IIAC in attack percentage (.293) and posted 387 kills and was second on the team in digs with 493. Hermann was sixth in the Conference in attack percentage (.271) while accumulating 321 kills and 97 blocks. Junior setter **Amber Rippentrop** will be counted on for leadership.

Dubuque head coach **Cole Tallman** says, "University of Dubuque will return the nucleus of offensive power from last season. A solid recruiting class will be counted on to compete for open positions and contribute immediately. UD Volleyball will never have trouble scoring points but the avoidance of 'keeping both teams in the game at the same time' will be one of the early goals this season."

Loras returns five starters and 12 letterwinners from last season's 18-18 team that finished sixth in the Conference with a 4-4 record. The Duhawks, in their first year under the direction of Teresa Kehe, made a four-game improvement in the league and secured the sixth and final spot in the IIAC Tournament. Junior setter **Jenny Dziubla** returns to distribute the ball after dishing out 1,466 assists, an average of 11.02 per game, to rank fifth in the Conference. Dziubla also ranked fourth in the league in digs (0.73/game) and posted 297 digs and team-highs with a .375 attack percentage and 73 service aces. Senior middle blocker **Jenna Kollasch** finished fifth in the league in blocks (0.95/game) and was second on the team with 320 digs. Senior outside hitter **Katherine Connolly** was second on the team with 303 digs and third in kills with 314. Junior outside hitter **Betsy Neverman** finished second on the team with 112 blocks and fourth on the team with 284 kills.

Loras head coach **Teresa Kehe** says, "Coming off of a positive and productive 2006 season, we have a great opportunity to build upon our efforts and continue improving both our skills and team chemistry."

Luther returns five starters and 10 letterwinners from last season's 3-27 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 0-8 record. The Norse will be led by senior outside hitters **Abby Lahr**, **Leah Sikora**, and **Amanda Lincoln**, and junior middle blocker Ally Czechowicz. Lahr led the team with 399 kills and was fourth in the IIAC with 3.91 kills per game. She enters the season ranked fourth all-time for career kills with 899. Sikora tallied 171 kills averaging 2.67 kills per game. Lincoln tallied 207 kills to rank second on the team and also tallied 49 digs and 27 blocks. Sophomore libero **Grayce Hamlin** posted a team-high 305 digs, while sophomore setter **Heather Hoffman** led the team with 1,038 assists.

Luther head coach **Jane Gibbs** says, "I am very excited to join the Luther College volleyball program this fall. I look forward to the challenge of competing in one of the most competitive DIII conferences and am anxious to get the season started."

Simpson returns three starters and six letterwinners from last season's 27-11 team that finished tied for the Iowa Conference title with a 6-2 record, won the Iowa Conference tournament title, and advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament. The Storm will be led offensively by junior middle hitter **Jayna Fischbach**. Fischbach was the team leader in service aces with 69, third on the squad in blocks (69) and fourth in kills (316). Sophomore setter **Tara Christensen**, a Second Team All-Conference selection, posted the second-best single-season assists mark in Storm history with 1,598 (an average of 12.11 per game). Christensen ranked 17th in NCAA Division III in assists and also led the Iowa Conference in the category. Sophomore libero **Brittany Friesth** charted 572 digs, the fifth most in school history. Frieseth recorded double-digit digs in 31-of-38 matches and her 4.33 digs per game average ranked eighth in the Iowa Conference.

Simpson head coach **Lana Smith** says, "We are excited for the 2007 season. Losing four key contributors from last years team, will test our underclassmen experience. We will continue to improve with each match as we strive for the Iowa Conference championship. Our challenge will be to be ready each night as our competitive schedule will test our experience and make us better."

Wartburg returns four starters and seven letterwinners from last season's 17-19 team that finished tied for third in the Conference with a 5-3 record, its tenth top-three Conference finish in the last 11 years. The Knights will be led by senior middle hitter Ashley Rogers, a three-time First Team All-Conference selection and a two-time honorable mention All-American. Rogers finished third in the IIAC in attack percentage (.277) and sixth in digs per game (3.74), leading Wartburg in both categories. Rogers enters the season ranked second all-time in career kills, 393 markers behind former standout Dia Dohlman. Senior libero **Ashley Steines**, a two-time All-Conference selection, led the league in digs (947) and digs per game (7.07) pacing a Wartburg squad that ended the year ranked third in NCAA Division III in digs per game (25.14). Junior outside hitter **Kelsey Steffens** finished second on the team with 356 kills and a .183 attack percentage. Sophomore right-side hitter **Liz Plum** led the team in blocks with 112, an average of 0.99 per game. Plum also ranked fourth in kills (192) and attack percentage (.186).

Wartburg head coach **Jennifer Walker** says, "Our 2007 squad will be one with a lot of experience. Our senior class has been an integral part of this program since they walked in the door as first-years. Their leadership will be the key in determining the success of this year's team. Last season, the conference race was the tightest it has been in the nine years that I have been coaching in this league. I expect the same sort of competition this season. We will have to be ready every night we compete in our IIAC matches. The 2007 IIAC volleyball season will be a fun one to follow!"