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2008-09 IOWA CONFERENCE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Defending IIAC champion Simpson College collected eight of nine first-places votes to capture the top spot in the 2008-09 IIAC Women's Basketball Coaches' Poll. The Storm, which reached the Sweet Sixteen of the NCAA Division III Women's Basketball Championships last season, received the maximum 72 points (coaches cannot vote for their own team).

Buena Vista University, which garnered the remaining first-place vote, edged Luther College by a single point, 57-56, for second place. Coe College received 52 points to rank fourth, just ahead of Loras College with 46 points. The complete 2008-09 IIAC Women's Basketball Coaches' Poll follows.

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2007-08 Record
1	Simpson (8)	72	(27-3, 15-1 IIAC)
2	Buena Vista (1)	57	(13-13, 7-9 IIAC)
3	Luther	56	(15-10, 12-4 IIAC)
4	Coe	52	(20-8, 11-5 IIAC)
5	Loras	46	(17-9, 9-7 IIAC)
6	Wartburg	37	(13-11, 6-10 IIAC)
	Dubuque	37	(14-13, 7-9 IIAC)
8	Central	21	(4-21, 2-14 IIAC)
9	Cornell	18	(8-17, 3-13 IIAC)

Preseason Polls: Simpson is ranked 16th by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA), 19th by D3hoops.com and 20th by Women's DIII News. Loras is among those receiving votes in the D3hoops.com preseason poll.

New Coaches: Central College has a new coach patrolling the sidelines. **Jerry Nikkel**, a highly successful prep basketball and softball coach in Central Iowa, assumes the head coaching position after four seasons as an assistant. He replaces **Natalie Nakic**. Nikkel racked up a 439-190 record in 29 years as a high school head basketball coach with stops at Pella Christian and Marshalltown.

Opening Weekend: The 2008-09 Iowa Conference women's basketball season tips off Saturday, November 15, with a trio of schools beginning play. Coe tackles Augustana (Ill.) at the Grinnell College Tournament, while Central travels to Westminster (Mo.) and Cornell hosts Bethany Lutheran College. Coe will face host Grinnell, Sunday, November 16, to wrap up the Grinnell College Tournament. The 18-date IIAC schedule begins Wednesday, December 3, with a complete slate of four games.

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

Buena Vista returns all five starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 13-13 team that finished tied for fifth in the Conference with a 7-9 record. Junior guard **Margo Muhlbauer**, a two-time First Team All-Iowa Conference selection, moved into a starting role last season and averaged 19.8 points to lead the league in scoring by a full 3 points per game. She also averaged 4.5 rebounds, 2.0 assists, and 1.5 steals per game, and ranked fifth in the Conference in free-throw percentage (81.9 percent) and 11th in field-goal percentage (46.9 percent). Muhlbauer is joined in the backcourt by senior guard **Katie Ebel**. Ebel averaged 9.2 points, 3.7 rebounds, 2.4 assists, and 1.7 steals. She ranked 27th in the Conference in scoring, 14th in assists, and ninth in steals and 3-point field-goal percentage (37.0 percent). Junior **Aubrey Hauswirth**, a Second Team All-Conference selection last season, will patrol the post. She averaged 9.2 points, 4.8 rebounds, and 1.4 assists, leading the Conference in field-goal percentage (61.0 percent). Hauswirth also ranked 26th in the Conference in scoring.

Buena Vista head coach **Janet Berry** says, "Experience I hope will be a real key for us this season. We have veterans in every position that are ready to battle in the IIAC."

Central returns two starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 4-21 team that finished ninth in the Conference with a 2-14 record. Senior guard **Laura Porter**, a First Team All-Conference selection in 2007, returns after missing last season with a knee injury. She averaged team-highs in points (15.2 ppg), assists (4.3 apg), and steals (1.7 spg) during the 2006-07 season. Up front, sophomore post **Andrea Clark** was a Second Team All-IIAC selection last season. Clark led the Dutch with a 13.3 points and 7.4 rebounds per game, ranking ninth in the Conference in scoring, fourth in the Conference in rebounding and free-throw percentage (83.0 percent), and sixth in blocked shots (1.28 per game). Senior post **Emily DeJong** played in 14 conference games last season, averaging 5.8 points and 5.2 rebounds per game.

Central head coach **Jerry Nikkel** says, "With the return of several experienced players from last season and some very promising freshman, the Dutch are looking to improve on their last place finish in the Conference in 2007-08."

Coe returns one starter and six letterwinners from last season's 20-8 team that finished third in the Conference with a 11-5 record. The Kohawk offense will run through sophomore guard Sarah Anciaux, a Second Team All-Conference selection last season. Anciaux averaged 10.0 points, 5.2 rebounds, 5.4 assists, and 1.3 steals. As a freshman, she ranked second in the Conference in assists, fifth in assist-to-turnover ratio, 15th in rebounding and field-goal percentage (43.2 percent), and 20th in scoring. In the frontcourt, junior center Brittany Norris and sophomore forward Kayla Lincoln return. Norris averaged 12.7 points, 4.7 rebounds, and 1.7 blocked shots, ranking third in the Conference in blocked shots, fifth in field-goal percentage (52.5 percent), and 11th in scoring. Lincoln appeared in all 28 games a year ago, averaging 5.5 points.

Coe head coach **Randi Peterson** says, "We are extremely young, but I have a great group of female student-athletes. There is a lot of teaching and learning that needs to happen this year. I look forward to seeing how all the pieces of this team fit together."

Cornell returns three starters and four letterwinners from last season's 8-17 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 3-13 record. Senior forward **Tiffany Cowan**, an honorable mention All-Iowa Conference selection last season, returns after averaging 12.1 points, 7.1 rebounds, 2.0 steals, and 0.6 blocks last season. Cowan ranked 12th in the league in scoring, 7th in rebounding, 4th in steals, and 15th in 3-point field-goal percentage (31.8 percent). Junior guard **Charlotte Milas** averaged 8.6 points and 1.2 assists in 25 games a year ago.

Cornell head coach **Brent Brase** says, "The team is continuing to work hard to establish the type of work ethic and culture required to have sustained success on and off the court."

Dubuque returns two starters and four letterwinners from last season's 14-13 team that finished tied for fifth in the Conference with a 7-9 record. The Spartans will be led by a trio of guards during the 2008-09 campaign. Junior **Jennifer Nichols**, a Second Team All-IIAC selection, led the team with a 16.2 point per game scoring average, good for fourth among league players. She also averaged 5.7 rebounds in 27 games and ranked third in the league in free-throw percentage (83.8 percent) and 13th in 3-point field-goal percentage (34.5 percent). Fellow junior **Briana Nelson** ranked second on the team in scoring at 11.0 points per game while also averaging 4.8 rebounds and 2.2 assists per outing. She ranked 13th in the league in scoring. Sophomore **Tena Stark** started 25 games a year ago, averaging 6.3 points, 3.0 rebounds, 1.3 steals, and 1.3 assists per contest.

Dubuque head coach **Mark Noll** says, "We will feature more depth this season, as we brought in 15 new players to our program this year. We will be a very young team overall with no seniors on our roster. Our returning players and their leadership is vital to our success this year, as a couple of transfers and several first-year players are expected to contribute. The competition in the IIAC is so tough from top to bottom and that is why it is great to be a part of this Conference!"

Loras returns three starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 17-9 team that finished fourth in the Conference with a 9-7 record. The Duhawks return three of their top four scorers from last season, including junior shooting guard **Lindsay Bava**, a First Team All-Conference honoree. Bava ranked second on the team in scoring last season with a 14.5 point per game average while also contributing 5.0 rebounds, 1.8 assists, and 1.3 steals per game. One of the league's more accurate shooters, she led the IIAC in free-throw percentage (84.6 percent) and ranked second in 3-point field-goal percentage (48.1 percent) and eighth in field-goal percentage (49.6 percent). In the end, she ranked fifth in the Conference in scoring. Junior point guard **Lisa Morrissey** averaged 8.0 points, 4.3 assists, and 2.2 steals per game, leading the team in each of the latter two categories. She also ranked among the league leaders in both categories, ranking third in assists and second in steals. Morrissey also ranked sixth in the IIAC in free-throw percentage (81.5 percent) and fourth in assist-to-turnover ratio (1.41). Junior center **Mindy Meyer** was third on the team in scoring (9.6 ppg) while posting team-high averages of 6.7 rebounds and 1.6 blocked shots per game. Meyer ranked second in field-goal percentage (55.9 percent), fourth in blocked shots and ninth in rebounding.

Loras head coach **Justin Heinzen** says, "I like the makeup of this team...our depth, chemistry, willingness to learn, and excitement to compete. I am happy with the development a few of our returners showed over the offseason and expect our newcomers to contribute from the opening tip."

Luther returns three starters and 11 letterwinners from last season's 15-10 team that finished second in the Conference with a 12-4 record. The Norse have an experienced floor general for 2008-09 in the form of senior point guard **Jackie Miller**. Miller, a 4-year starter, averaged 4.5 points, 2.8 rebounds, 1.5 steals, and 1.4 assists per game last season. Sophomore guard **Camille Stenhaus** and senior forward **Amanda Dahlseng** will shoulder much of the scoring load for the Blue and White this season. Last year, Stenhaus, an honorable mention All-IIAC selection, was second on the team in scoring with a 10.8 point per game average. She also averaged 3.4 rebounds, 1.3 assists, and 1.3 steals per game and ranked 14th in the Conference in scoring and 12th in 3-point field-goal percentage (34.6 percent). Dahlseng, who averaged 8.3 points, 4.0 rebounds, 1.6 assists, and 1.1 steals per game last season, ranked seventh in the IIAC in free-throw percentage (79.2 percent).

Luther head coach **Jane Hildebrand** says, "We are excited for this season. It brings new challenges but truly believe our returners have stepped it up a notch and will be striving for a top finish in the league."

Simpson returns two starters and 11 letterwinners from last season's 27-3 team that won the program's seventh Iowa Conference title with a 15-1 record and advance to the sectional semifinal round of the NCAA Tournament for the second consecutive year. The Storm had two All-Conference selections plus last year's MVP, but returns only one of that trio for 2008-09. Senior forward **Whitney Franker**, a First Team All-IIAC honoree, averaged 9.5 points, 3.9 rebounds, 4.0 assists, and 1.9 steals in 30 games a year ago, ranking fourth in the league in assists, third in assist-to-turnover ratio (+1.49), 10th in 3-point field-goal percentage (36.6 percent), 11th in free-throw percentage (73.3 percent) and steals, 14th in field-goal percentage (43.2 percent), and 24th in scoring. Fellow seniors **Carrie Larson** and **Maria Oliver** both came off the bench and played in all 30 games last season. Larson, a forward, averaged 8.0 points, 1.6 assists, and 0.9 steals per game. She ranked tenth in the Conference in free-throw percentage (73.5 percent). Oliver, a post player, averaged 7.4 points, 4.1 rebounds, and 1.5 blocked shots. She ranked fifth in the IIAC in blocked shots.

Simpson head coach **Brian Niemuth** says, "There was a very strong class of seniors in the conference last year. Their graduation will surely have an impact on the competition this year. The conference race will be interesting with the balance that will be evident among the teams. The teams in this league are well coached and well motivated. I know we are looking forward to the challenge of another season."

Wartburg returns four starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 13-11 team that finished seventh in the Conference with a 6-10 record. Senior center **Sharese Van Sloten**, an honorable mention All-Iowa Conference pick a year ago, averaged 10.5 points and a team-high 7.5 rebounds per game last season. She ranked third in the IIAC in rebounding, 18th in scoring and 10th in field-goal percentage (47.3 percent). Sophomore guard **Samantha Harrington** chipped in with 10.5 points and a team-high 1.7 steals per game, ranking just behind Van Sloten on the IIAC's scoring chart in 19th place. She also ranked 12th in steals and eighth in 3-point field-goal percentage (37.3 percent). Junior point guard **Hollie Silvey** started 23 out of 24 games last season, averaging 2.4 points and a team-high 3.2 assists per game.

Wartburg head coach **Bob Amsberry** says, "We will be extremely young again this season and will need to continue to learn what it takes to compete in the very challenging Iowa Conference. I am excited about the leadership our upperclassmen are providing, which should show dividends as we continue to build the program."