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2003 IOWA CONFERENCE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

MOUNT VERNON, IOWA . . . Conference tri-Champions Central, Coe and Wartburg are again picked by the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference head coaches to finish atop the IIAC standings in 2003. Wartburg edged Central for the top spot in the preseason coaches poll with 43 points and three first place votes. Central was picked second, finishing with 40 points and one first place vote. Coe came in third with 33 points. The complete 2003 IIAC coaches poll follows.

Rank	School	Points
1 st	Wartburg (3)	43
2 nd	Central (1)	40
3 rd	Coe	33
4 th	Loras (1)	28
5 th	Simpson	27
6 th	Luther	20
7 th	Buena Vista	16
8 th	Cornell	13
9 th	Dubuque	5
Note: First-place votes in parenthesis. Nine points awarded for first-place vote, Eight points awarded for second-place vote		

“The competition in the League is fiercely competitive. The difference from top to bottom is paper thin and if your team doesn’t show up ready to play, it could be a difficult year,” Simpson coach **Jay Niemann** said.

Central’s **Rich Kacmarynski** said, “I feel the IIAC is one of the best Conference’s in Division III, as evidence by our performance in the playoffs last year. I feel the race will be a knock-down, drag-out affair again this year.”

“The competition in the Conference continues to be excellent and it is a great challenge every week to have your football team ready,” Cornell coach **Ray Reasland** said.

Luther’s **Paul Hefty** said, “I would expect last year’s Conference champs (Central, Coe, Wartburg) to all contend again this year with every other program challenging them in one of the top football Conferences in the nation.”

PRESEASON POLLS: Defending Conference tri-Champions Central, Coe and Wartburg were ranked in preseason polls by four national publications. Wartburg was ranked 11th in the D3football.com Preseason Top-25, 12th in the Don Hansen’s *National Weekly Football Gazette* Preseason Top-40, 13th in the *Street and Smith’s* Preseason Top-25 and 20th in the *Lindy’s* Preseason Top-25.

Central was ranked 18th in *Lindy's* Preseason Top-25, 20th in the *Street and Smith's* Preseason Top-25, 22nd in the D3football.com Preseason Top-25 and 31st in the Don Hansen's *National Weekly Football Gazette* Preseason Top-40.

Coe was ranked 24th in the Don Hansen's *National Weekly Football Gazette* Preseason Top-40.

PRESEASON ALL-AMERICANS: Wartburg defensive lineman **Vince King** (Burlington, Iowa/Burlington HS) was named to Don Hansen's *Football Gazette* and D3football.com Preseason All-American First Teams. Central linebacker **Mark Sanger** (Britt, Iowa/West Hancock HS), Coe linebacker **Zach Pfantz** (Melbourne, Iowa/West Marshall HS) and Wartburg offensive lineman **Jeff Voreis** (Bloomington, Minn./Kennedy HS) were all named to Don Hansen's *Football Gazette* Preseason All-American Third Team.

Wartburg running back **Brad Hodapp** (Solon, Iowa/Solon HS) and Simpson punter **Mike Donnenwerth** (Sheffield, Iowa/SCMT HS) were named to D3football-com's Preseason All-American Second Team.

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Buena Vista University Beavers
(2002 Record – 3-7, 3-6 T-6th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 12/14 (Offense – 4/6, Defense 5/6, Specialty – 2/2)

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 36/15

About the 2003 Beavers: Buena Vista returns a veteran line-up for fifth-year coach **Steve Osterberger** that includes it's top three rushers from last season, four of its top five receivers and eight of its top nine tacklers.

"Our football team will look to improve on last year's record. We have some players returning with experience but continue to be young with only 10 seniors on the team," Osterberger said. "We are looking to move back into the upper half of the Iowa Conference. We will take our season one game at a time."

Guiding the offense is junior quarterback **Eric Wiebers**, who won the starting job midway through the 2002 season after splitting time with **Eric Jamison**. Wiebers completed 120-of-233 passes for 1,648 yards and 13 touchdowns. Though he lost his number one receiver, he will have an experienced receiving corps with **Justin Wiig**, **Brandon Artist**, **Michael Sullivan** and **Brandon Johnson**.

Wiig had 34 receptions for 366 yards, Artist and Sullivan both had 23 receptions for 328 and 265 yards, respectively. That trio each had a touchdown apiece. In just seven contests, Johnson had nine catches for 112 yards.

Barry Van Voorst led the Beavers in rushing with 644 yards on 181 carries and eight touchdowns. **Joe Pick** had 42 carries for 189 yards and **Craig Rowedder** had 173 yards on 66 carries.

Defensively, linebacker **Michael Irvin** led the team with 97 tackles, nine tackles for loss and three sacks. Defensive backs **Scott Jamison** and **Troy Nielsen** had 59 and 53 tackles, respectively. Jamison had 12 passes defended and three interceptions. Nielsen, a Second Team All-Conference selection, added two sacks and two interceptions.

James Mitchell (32 tackles, two sacks) returns on the defensive line while **Ian Gardner** (35 tackles, four tackles for loss) returns at linebacker. Returning in the defensive backfield are **Michael Lang** (36 tackles) and **Matt Ambrose** (30 tackles, nine passes defended).

Sullivan connected on 5-of-8 field goals and 17-of-21 PATs. VanVoorst returned 19 kicks for 363 yards last season. Nielsen is the most experienced punt returner, averaging 12.8 yards on five returns.

Central College Dutch **(2002 Record – 8-2, 8-1 T-1st in IIAC)**

Starters Returning/Lost: 14/12 (Offense – 6/5, Defense – 6/6, Specialty – 2/1)
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 31/24

About the 2003 Dutch: Central enters the 2003 season with 42 consecutive winning seasons, the second longest string in college football history. However, Central's streak of four straight playoff berths ended in 2002 despite earning a share of its third straight Conference title.

"The guys were very disappointed that we didn't go to the playoffs," seventh-year coach **Rich Kacmarynski** said. "But they also recognize that we need to take care of business. It's nice to have an experienced quarterback but it's even nicer to have an offensive line back with experience."

Of the six returning offensive starters from last year, four are back in the offensive line and one at quarterback. Junior **Mark Isaacson** returns as Central's signal caller. Last season he completed 86-of-160 passes for 1,170 yards with 10 touchdowns and six interceptions. The offensive line is led by All-Conference performers **Brandon Sowers** (guard) and **Ike Hammerly** (center). Also returning are seniors **Jeremy Christofferson** (guard) and **Ryan McCombs** (tackle).

Tyler Baethke rushed for 748 yards on 163 carries (4.6 yards per rush) and six touchdowns. **Joey Liekweg** returned last year to rush for 528 yards on 127 carries after sitting out the entire 2001 season because of injury.

Central's receiving corps will be led by **Trent Cooper**, who had 19 catches for 327 yards and three touchdowns last season, and tight end **Bryan Rempt**, who had seven catches for 101 yards and three touchdowns. **Kurt Rietema** and **Derrick Livingston**, who saw time at quarterback last year and could be moved to tight end, should also provide receiving depth.

Middle linebacker **Mark Sanger** and defensive end **Mike Rasmussen** lead Central's defense. Sanger, an All-Region selection last season and a preseason All-American this year, had a team-high 91 tackles while Rasmussen led the team with 13.5 tackles for loss and 10 sacks.

Brady Boese, who had 55 tackles last season, returns at outside linebacker. **Kevin Bonstetter** and **Rich Caves** are the most experienced of a group of five candidates for the other outside linebacker position.

Greg Shepherd, **Kyle Paris** and **Matt Matthews** provide depth and experience to the stinger position, a combination defensive end/outside linebacker. Paris had 41 tackles last year with two interceptions, two sacks, 3.5 tackles for loss, five pass breakups and two forced fumbles. Shepherd had eight tackles and Matthews had seven.

Ryan J. Johnson is the most tested of the cornerback candidates. He made 24 tackles last year with three interceptions and three pass breakups. **Nick Cross** returns at free safety, having made 44 tackles last season.

Punter **Keith Wasoba** averaged 34.5 yards on 42 kicks, 10 of which landed inside the 20-yard line. **Troy Hocker** converted on 30-of-35 extra-point kicks while converting 4-of-9 field goal tries.

Rex Gray was the workhorse on returns last season, returning 22 kickoffs (23.5 yards/return) and 34 punts (10.1 yards/return). Don't look for that to change.

Coe College Kohawks
(2002 Record – 10-2, 8-1 T-1st in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 13/12 (Offense - 6/5, Defense - 5/6, Specialty - 2/1)
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 28/16

About the 2003 Kohawks: Coe will suffer the effects of the graduation of two-time Conference Most Valuable Player **Fredrick Jackson** but still return a veteran team that shared the 2002 Conference Championship. Leading the group of returnees are four Second Team All-Conference performers – fullback **Matt Wycoff**, receiver **Jon Rife**, and linebackers **Zach Pfantz** and **Blake Borrett**.

“We have a good nucleus of players returning and we had great off-season workouts, so we are very excited for the upcoming season,” fourth-year coach **Erik Raeburn** said. “I’m confident we will get a great effort and preparation from our players.”

Wycoff rushed for 597 yard on 105 carries and five touchdowns while adding 20 receptions for 254 yards. Rife was quarterback **Joe Brannen’s** favorite target last season with 49 receptions for 793 yards and seven touchdowns. **Jared Rance** and **Josh Hoeg** had 283 and 214 receiving yards, respectively last season as Brannen finished the season with 2,107 passing yards and 17 touchdowns. **Cody Angle** will provide a receiving option from his tight end position.

Coe graduated four of their starting offensive linemen but return guards **Chris Bell** and **Mike Kelley** from the squad that ranked second in the Conference in rushing offense and fourth in passing offense. **Tyler Boos** and **Justin Stein** have come off the bench in the past and should move into the starting line-up this year.

On defense, Pfantz was an All-Region selection last season and is a preseason All-American this year. He recorded 90 tackles, 14.5 tackles for loss and six sacks last season, his first at linebacker after converting from fullback. Borrett had 79 tackles last season. In the backfield **Jim Gordon** and **Tyler Staker** return at the corners. Gordon had 51 tackles and nine passes defended while Staker had 28 tackles and five pass break-ups.

Brad McCloskey, a key special teams performer in the past, looks to be the leading candidate for the strong safety position while **Lucas Ptacek**, who missed last season with an injury, and **John Greiner** are competing for the other safety position.

The only other returning defensive starter is end **Scott Sutton** who had 46 tackles, 11 tackles for loss and four sacks last season. **Benge Tallman**, **Matt Martinez** and **Lucas Schaefer** should see time on the defensive line with Sutton.

On special teams, Rance is the most experienced kick returner averaging 19.8 yards on 13 returns last season. Coe does not return an experienced punt returner. Angle handled the punting duties last season, averaging 33.8 yards on 49 punts. **Brian Karnik** returns as Coe’s place kicker after converting 43-of-52 PATs last season. The team did not attempt a field goal all season.

Cornell College Rams
(2002 Record – 4-6, 3-6 T-6th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 14/10 (Offense - 9/2, Defense - 3/8, Specialty - 2/0)
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 32/17

About the 2003 Rams: A veteran offense returns for Cornell but only three starters return on the defensive side of the ball for the Rams who struggled through a 4-6 season in **Ray Reasland's** first season as head coach.

"We return an explosive offense that presents a strong balance between the run and pass," Reasland said. "Our defensive personnel will try to improve on the inconsistency of play at times during the first half of the season a year ago. The special teams will continue to improve as the team's numbers grow, improving the quality and depth of the program."

Quarterback **Chris Lovely** missed much of the 2002 season with an injury after earning All-Conference honors in 2001. Last season he completed 49-of-96 passes for 740 yards and eight touchdowns. He also rushed for 222 yards and three touchdowns on 76 carries. **Adam Hadenfeldt** played well in Lovely's absence and will provide strong competition at the position. He passed for 1,096 yards and seven touchdowns and rushed for 292 yards and three touchdowns.

Slot back **Jesse Woskowicz** was Cornell's leading rusher and third leading returning receiver. He rushed for 370 yards and four touchdowns on just 55 carries (6.7 yards/carry). He caught 11 passes for 158 yards and one touchdown. Wide receiver **Matt Ditch**, a First Team All-Conference selection, led the Rams with 58 receptions, 907 receiving yards and nine touchdowns.

Slot back **Rusty Yansky** had 14 receptions for 241 yards and rushed for 258 yards and two touchdowns on 46 carries. Fullback **Ricky Legree** had 58 carries for 264 yards and four touchdowns.

The offensive line returns four starters in left tackle **Zach Frazer**, left guard **Mike Griswold**, center **Chad Hepperly** and right guard **Adam Martin**. Behind this unit, the Cornell offense ranked third in passing and fourth in rushing in the Conference last season.

Defensively, Cornell lost two All-Conference performers and returns just outside linebackers **Dominic Wilson** and **Mike Tilford**, and tackle **Mike Kilburg** to the starting line-up. Wilson led the team with 14 tackles for loss, tied for the team lead with 5.5 sacks and ranked third with 74 tackles. Tilford had 46 tackles, five tackles for loss and one sack last season. Kilburg had 14 tackles.

Defensive lineman **Brian Benight** (25 tackles, five tackles for loss and two sacks), linebacker **Nick Gallagher** (32 tackles, seven tackles for loss and one sack) and defensive back **Blue Aldridge** (23 tackles and two interceptions) will see increased playing time this season.

Kicker **Joe Conklin** converted on 31-of-35 PATs last season but had two of his four field goal attempts blocked. Ditch averaged 36.1 yards on 42 punts last season.

University of Dubuque Spartans
(2002 Record – 1-9, 0-9 10th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 21/6 (Offense – 6/5, Defense – 10/1, Specialty – 5/0)
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 56/18

About the 2003 Spartans: Dubuque will take on a different look than in past years. The difference is the number of returning players on the roster. Though there are only three seniors, the sophomore and junior classes have considerable experience.

“Look for a team that will get better as the season progresses,” third-year coach **Vince Brautigam** said. “This group of players will be an exciting team to watch once they learn to play together and gel as a unit.”

Offensively, the Spartans return five offensive linemen with starting experience – three-year starter **Jake Bellich**, two-year starter **Brett Jaovaniac**, and three sophomores **Renno Ravenna**, **Kenny Knight** and **Sean Carpenter**.

Will Hewlett returns as the starting quarterback but **Matt Rear** will provide an experienced back-up. In eight games last season Hewlett competed 43-of-114 passes for 498 yards and two touchdowns. Rear completed 45-of-142 passes for 515 yards and one touchdown.

Maurice Avant has moved from wide receiver to running back and will compete with freshmen **Aaron Scott** and **Dustin Heep**. **Daunta Peterson** (11 catches for 196 yards in four games) and **Cory Fry** (13 catches for 154 yards in six games) will replace Avant as the team’s top receiver.

Defensively, 10 starters return including the team’s top tackler, safety **Prince Bussie** (108 tackles). Joining Bussie in the defensive backfield are strong safety **Shawn Sandiford** (18 tackles) and cornerbacks **Danny Morton** (three tackles in three games) and **Thoni Oriental** (35 tackles). **Jonathan Southworth** and **Joe Petisco** will add depth.

Garrett Perrone (third on team with 45 tackles), **Steve Clements** (28 tackles in seven games) and **Justin Gill** (25 tackles) lead the Dubuque linebacking corps.

The defensive line is one of Dubuque’s deepest and most experienced units led by three-year starters **Nate McCullough** (end) and **Trey Nebergall** (tackle). McCullough ranked fourth on the team with 44 tackles and Nebergall had 34 tackles with a team-high eight tackles for loss.

Chris Alitz (20 tackles) returns at nose guard while **Cory Folk** and **Alden Brown**, both part-time starters last season will compete for the other end position. **Mike Mandot**, **Anthony Wilson**, **Kyle McClintock**, **Kenny Brink**, **Rick Ringer** and **Chris Taylor** will provide depth on the line.

Rear and **Levi Jarvi** will handle the kicking duties. Rear ranked third in the Conference in punting last season with a 36.9 yard average. Avant and Peterson will handle kick return duties. Last season Avant averaged 18.6 yards on 38 kick returns and also returned 30 punts for 138 yards.

Loras College Duhawks
(2002 Record – 5-5, 4-5 5th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 16/10 (Offense – 6/5, Defense – 8/3, Specialty - 2/2)
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 42/19

About the 2003 Duhawks: With a solid corps returning at all the offensive skill positions, and eight defensive starters back, head coach **Bob Bierie**, in his 24th season, feels his 2003 Duhawk team has the potential to be a factor in the Iowa Conference race.

“We are really talented,” Bierie said. “Our depth is a concern. If we stay healthy though, we have a lot of potential. Our schedule favors us, if we are playing well, to make a strong showing in the league this year.”

Loras is deep at running back led by All-Conference tailback **Jeremy Brown** (1,117 yards on 237 carries) who finished second in the Conference in rushing last season. **Dee Hill** (369 yards on 67 carries) provides a slashing-type runner as opposed to Brown’s hard-nose method. **Josh Brown** and **Quentin Smith** both return as capable runners and blockers at fullback.

Matt Hintz played in six games at quarterback a year ago and proved he is ready to move into the starting role in 2003. Hintz completed 23-of-40 passes for 347 yards and three touchdowns.

The receiving unit is where Loras will be most improved offensively. **Nick Brown** (15 catches for 289 yards and three TD) and **Bobby Haddick** (10 catches for 157 yards) will move into the top-two receiver positions. **Matt Burds** and **Dave Meyer** will get plenty of opportunities at wide-out as well. **Adam Welbes** returns at tight end.

The Duhawks must replace four offensive linemen. **Tom Kropf** (guard) and **Dan Wood** (tackle) are the most experienced returnees. **Steve Campbell**, **Ross Weiler**, **Pat Sullivan** and **Jim Milner** will compete for starting spots.

Two years ago the Loras defense ranked ninth in the Conference. Last season, the team improved to fourth and returns eight starters this year.

Ryan Carney (54 tackles, 9 tackles for loss, 4 sacks), **Brian Mettille** (24 tackles) and **Travis Sullivan** (90 tackles, 9.5 tackles for loss) lead a strong and experience linebacker unit. **Ron Udelhofen** and **Mike Standafer** will add depth.

On the line, **Steve Loppnow** and **Larry Gainey, Jr.** (39 tackles, 10 tackles for loss, 4 sacks) return. **Ross Dillavou** has moved to the defensive side of the ball and should battle for time, along with **Jason Wenzel**.

Victor Jones and **Will Johnson** return at cornerback. Johnson is healthy again after missing a good portion of the 2002 campaign. **Joe Roudez** and **Clint Miller** will be the safeties.

Tony Foxen, who connected on 16-of-22 PATs last season, returns. Nick and Jeremy Brown are the top kick returners. Jeremy Brown averaged 18.1 yards on 15 kick returns last season. Nick Brown averaged 19.4 yards on five punt returns and 16.0 yards on eight returns. The Duhawks need to find a replacement for three-time All-Conference punter **Roberto Pino**.

Luther College Norse
(2002 Record – 4-6, 3-6 T-6th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 15/9 (Offense - 7/4, Defense - 7/4, Specialty - 1/1)
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 29/22

About the 2003 Norse: A veteran group of starters return for Luther as eight of its 15 returnees are seniors and four are juniors.

“We hope to improve from last year and continue to make strides toward being an upper level team within the always tough Iowa Conference,” second-year coach **Paul Hefty** said.

The Norse offense is led by running back **Mike Jefferson**, who enters the season needing 90 yards to surpass the 2,000 career yard mark. He currently ranks seventh on the school’s all-time rushing list. He has led the team in rushing each of his three seasons including a 749-yard, seven touchdown season in 2002. He also added seven receptions for 48 yards out of the backfield.

Jefferson will be joined in the backfield by fullback **Seth Wigle** and quarterback **James Daubendick**. Wigle had 220 yards and four touchdowns on 46 carries last season. Daubendick appeared in five games and passed for 300 yards. **Nate Roland** also returns with quarterback experience, passing for 342 yards in six games last season.

A young receiving corps awaits Daubendick and Roland. **Adam Anderson** was Luther’s fourth leading receiver last season but is the top returning receiver having 11 catches for 131 yards.

The offensive line returns four starters – **Dan Elliot** (left tackle), **Erick Weeg** (left guard), **Lucas Giambelluca** (right guard) and **Josh Minnes** (right tackle).

On the defensive side of the ball, linebacker **John Jaeger**, a Second Team All-Conference selection, led the team with 91 tackles and 14 tackles for loss last season. He also had three sacks and two interceptions. **Dan Roggenbuck** joins Jaeger at linebacker. In seven games last season, Roggenbuck had 27 tackles and 5.5 tackles for loss.

Zach Wigle was second on the team with 63 tackles last season and leads a group of three returnees in the defensive backfield that includes **Sam McDonald** (31 tackles, two INTs in seven games) and **Lucas Franklin**.

Luther’s defensive line includes nose tackle **Scott Romens** and end **Kevin Pennekamp**. Romens had 43 tackles, six tackles for loss and two sacks last season. Pennekamp had 38 tackles, nine tackles for loss and three sacks.

Jaeger handled the punting duties for Luther last season, averaging 36 yards on 65 punts last season. Jefferson (22.3 yards per return) and Anderson (13.6 yards per return) return as the top-two kick returners. Anderson also led the team with 19 punt returns (7.3 yards per return).

Simpson College Storm **(2002 Record – 6-4, 6-3 4th in IIAC)**

Starters Returning/Lost: 10/14 (Offense - 6/5, Defense - 3/8, Specialty - 1/1)
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 26/17

About the 2003 Storm: Simpson must replace 20 seniors from last season's team that finished 6-4 in **Jay Niemann's** first season at the helm.

"We have a major rebuilding job to do, especially on defense," Niemann said. "We hope to be competitive but the offense will have to produce early while the defense finds itself."

All-Conference quarterback and punter **Mike Donnenwerth**, a preseason All-American punter, is coming off a season in which he set the school record with 2,318 passing yards, and finished fifth in the nation in passing efficiency (161.0) and seventh in punting (39.4 yards per punt). He also led the Iowa Conference in passing yards (231.8 yards/game), total offense (224.1 yards/game), passing efficiency and punting. He earned All-American accolades as a punter.

Donnenwerth will be working with a new set of receivers as both starting wide-outs and the starting tight end from 2002 have graduated. Fullback **Greg Dreyer** had 22 receptions for 285 yards out of the backfield. **Mike Tiedeman** had seven receptions for 68 yards last season. **Dusty Kain** and **Kurt Hanna** should also see time at the receiver position. **Rob Carpenter** and **Matt Ritchey** will fight for the starting tight end spot.

In the backfield, **Pete Kirwan** rushed for 245 yards on 99 carries but was limited to seven games due to injury. Dreyer rushed for 201 yards on 43 carries in 10 games. **John Soenen**, like Kirwan, was limited to four games due to injury, finished third on the team in rushing with 215 yards.

All-Conference tackle **Doug Dodds** will anchor the offensive line. **Ross Parker** (left guard) and **Andrew Lansink** (right tackle) return to the Storm's starting line-up. **Erik Jacobson**, **Jeff Gingerich**, **Nick Pingel**, **Adam Curran** and **Craig Rogers** will compete for the center and right guard positions.

All-Region cornerback **Kyle Westphal** led the team with five interceptions and was fifth in the nation with 2.4 passes defended per game. He leads a Simpson defense that only returns two other starters - **Ben Jauer** (linebacker) and **Randal Schultz** (safety). Jauer finished second on the team with 91 tackles and had two interceptions. Schultz had 54 tackles and two interceptions.

Brian DeDecker, **Tyler Heckman**, **Aaron Helling**, **Casey Howe**, **Mark Klaus** and **Jason Ripke** all saw limited action on the defensive line in 2002 but will see considerably more time in 2003 as all four positions are opened.

The quartet of **Beau Barrett**, **Jesse Dubishar**, **Chris Kern** and **Jeremy Scott** will compete for playing time along side Jauer.

Matt Haberl, **James Hoffman**, **Adam Leber** and **Taylor Rettig** along with **Jacob Johnson**, who is moving over from the offensive side of the ball, will compete for playing time in the defensive backfield.

Upper Iowa University Peacocks (2002 Record – 2-8, 2-7 9th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 14/10 (Offense - 7/4, Defense - 6/5, Specialty - 1/1)
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 26/17

About the 2003 Peacocks: Upper Iowa will compete in a full Iowa Conference schedule but as a non-Conference team after reclassifying to Division II.

“Our offensive and defensive lines should be our strength going into this season, as we have three returning starters on both lines,” first-year coach **Courtney Messingham** said. We have a good nucleus of returning players and will rely on their leadership to help us compete.”

Defensive back **Josh Thomas** led the team with five interceptions and ranked third with 83 tackles. Lineman **Jon Scranton** had 81 tackles. Four others who had impressive numbers in limited action return on the defensive side of the ball. Lineman **Mark Norman** had 12 tackles in just three games and linebacker **Brad Mohwinkle** had 14 tackles in four games. Linebacker **Shayne Hammond** appeared in eight games and recorded 28 tackles and 3.5 tackles for loss. Defensive back **Alec Bliss** had 14 tackles in eight games.

Upper Iowa’s top two receivers return on offense. **Jesse Montalto** had 47 catches for 749 yards and six touchdowns last season while **Kyle Hite** had 19 catches for 211 yards and one touchdown. **Wayne Traylor** had 10 receptions for 138 yards from his tight end position.

Mike Morrissey saw action in six games at quarterback last season, completing 23-of-57 passes for 253 yards. He did not throw a touchdown but was intercepted eight times. The Peacocks running game will lie in the hands of **Adam Johnson**. He rushed for 78 yards on 45 carries last season, which was fourth on the team.

Paul Maafu, Aaron Maar, Eddie Rubio and **Derek Turner** anchor the offensive line.

Hite was also the team’s top kick returner last season. He averaged 18.9 yards on 26 kick returns and 4.9 yards on 16 punt returns. Bliss averaged 20.3 yards on 14 kick returns last season.

Wartburg College Knights **(2002 Record – 10-2, 8-1 T-1st in IIAC)**

Starters Returning/Lost: 20/6 (Offense – 8/3, Defense – 9/2, Specialty – 3/1)
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 38/17

About the 2003 Knights: Wartburg returns nine starters to the defense that ranked in the top-10 nationally in 2002 in total defense, rushing defense and scoring defense.

“We are hopeful that the talent and experience in an outstanding senior class will lead the way,” seventh-year coach **Rick Willis** said. “Our strength will rest in the defense which returns nine starters and a strong rushing attack led by an experienced offensive line.”

Among the nine returning starters on the defensive side of the ball are All-Americans **Vince King** (lineman) and **Cody Kelley** (defensive back). King led the Conference and ranked seventh in the nation with 29 tackles for loss. Kelley had 40 tackles and six interceptions last season. Three All-Conference performers, lineman **J.J. Zearley**, linebacker **Justin Bishop** and defensive back **Brian McIntire**, also return to the Knights’ defense. Zearley led the IIAC with 10 sacks last season. Bishop had 74 tackles, 14.5 tackles for loss and 6.5 sacks as a junior. As a freshman, McIntire recorded 43 sacks.

Mark Kappmeyer and **Noah Junge** will see extensive action on the line with King and Zearley. **Eugene Thomas**, **Aaron Countryman**, **John Mosbach** and **Jake Burns** will join Kelley and McIntire in the backfield.

Joining Bishop is **Matt Stoffel**, who was third on the team with 79 tackles last season. **Chris Robertson**, **Alex Pollock** and **Josh Karsjens** will compete for the open linebacker spot in the Knights’ 4-3 defense.

Wartburg’s ground game finished 13th in the nation in 2002 (238.6 yards per game) and return three linemen and a First Team All-Conference running back. Preseason All-American **Jeff Voreis**, **Tim Velky** and **Andrew Heitman** return on the offensive line. Heitman and Voreis both earned All-Conference honors in 2002. Preseason All-American **Brad Hodapp** rushed for 1,248 yards last season, seventh-best single season total in school history. He enters the season needing just 64 yards for 2,000 in his career.

The experienced offensive line should help Wartburg’s young quarterbacks. Sophomores **Matt Keel** and **Reed Hoskins** are the leading candidates to replace All-Conference quarterback **Jake Olsen**. **Chris Winter** returns as Wartburg’s number one receiver. He tied for the team lead with five touchdown receptions and ranked second in receptions (29) and receiving yards (373 yards) despite missing six games due to injury. Joining Winter at the receiver position will be **Clint Finley** and **Josh Johnson**.

Wartburg’s special teams are in good shape with the return of All-Conference kicker **Jordan Maus** who converted on 11-of-16 field goals. Punter **Mark Giesmann** averaged 36.1 yards per punt last season. Hodapp is the Knights’ top return man, earning Second Team All-Conference honors in 2002.