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2003-04 IOWA CONFERENCE MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Two-time defending Champion Buena Vista University is once again the favorite among Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) men's basketball coaches. Buena Vista received seven of eight first place votes for 69 points. Simpson received the other first place vote and placed second in the Coaches Poll with 57 points, one point ahead of Wartburg and three points ahead of Loras. The complete 2003-04 IIAC Men's Basketball Coaches Poll follows.

Rank	School	Points
1st	Buena Vista (7)	69
2 nd	Simpson (1)	57
3rd	Wartburg	56
4th	Loras	54
5th	Luther	35
6th	Coe	34
7th	Cornell	30
8th	Central	15
9th	Dubuque	10
Note: First-place votes in parenthesis; Points awarded 9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1		

"There seem to be five or six teams who are capable of making a difference in the Conference race. I anticipate Buena Vista will be the front runner again this season with MVP Eric Wiebers returning," Wartburg coach **Dick Peth** said.

"There are no walkovers in this Conference," Dubuque coach **Marty McDermott** said. "The top teams in the IIAC are great examples of where we want to get to as a program."

"The Conference race should be excellent again this year with anyone being able to win on any given night. Buena Vista should have the advantage with their returning players but it should be a great race," Simpson coach **Bruce Wilson** said. "Cornell, Wartburg and Coe return very good perimeter players and Loras finished very strong last year and returns an excellent nucleus to build on. I think Dubuque and Central will be improved with their new coaching staffs."

Division I Opponents: Both Simpson College and Cornell College will meet NCAA Division I schools during the season. Simpson plays at Drake University on November 21 and Cornell travels to Northern Illinois University on December 15. Both games tip-off at 7:05 p.m.

Buena Vista University Beavers **(27-4, 16-2 1st in IIAC)**

Starters Returning/Lost: 4/1

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 9/3

About the 2003-04 Beavers: Buena Vista is looking to become the first team to win three straight outright IIAC titles since Central College won four straight from 1977-80. Last season the Beavers advanced to the “Sweet 16” for the second time in four years and look to advance further this season. Buena Vista is ranked eighth in the D3hoops.com Preseason Poll.

“This year we have a more experienced group of players,” seventh-year head coach **Brian Van Haaften** said. “We have a group of players who are versatile and can play various positions. We will be looking for some people to fill the void in the post after losing a lot of production to graduation.”

Leading the group of nine returning letterwinners is Conference Most Valuable Player and First Team All-Region guard **Eric Wiebers**. He finished second in the Conference in scoring last season with a 15.2 point per game average while leading the IIAC with 81 three-point field goals. His 47.4 percent from behind the arc ranked seventh in the nation.

Joining Wiebers in the backcourt is senior **Casey Pelzer** whose 4.58 assists per game were second in the Conference. Pelzer also averaged 6.6 points and 3.0 rebounds per game.

Senior forward **Scott Weber** a two-time First Team All-Conference selection was sixth in the Conference in scoring (13.8 ppg) and fifth in rebounding (7.0 rpg) last season. Juniors **Brandon Kies** and **Michael Cameron** combined to start 31 games. Cameron finished 30th in the IIAC in scoring (9.5 ppg) and 11th in steals (1.35 spg). Kies averaged 7.0 points per game.

Buena Vista has depth as it returns seven other players that saw action last season including: seniors **Brian Sohn** and **Landon Stribe**, juniors **Randy Bissen**, **Jordan Campbell** and **Reece Viet**, and sophomores **Nolan Grimm** and **Matt Wittry**.

Central College Dutch
(5-21, 5-13 T-8th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 2/3

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 6/3

About the 2003-04 Dutch: Central had four players in the top-20 in the Conference in scoring but only senior **Scott Veldhuizen** returns. He finished seventh in the Conference in scoring (13.8 ppg), 13th in three-point field goals made (1.38/game) and ninth in three-point field goal percentage (38.7 percent).

“We will be an inexperienced team this year with a lot of new faces playing significant minutes for us. With the departure of **Scott Huisman**, **Joe Steinkamp** and **Tony Polito**, you’re losing the leading Conference scorer and rebounder, and two other double-digit scorers,” first-year head coach **Mike Boschee** said. “That will be hard to replace, but when people move on, there also comes the opportunity for others to step up and fill the holes left behind. I hope we will have a group of young men that love to play together and are exciting to watch because of the effort they put forth every night.”

Junior guard **Darin Schuknecht** is Central’s only other returning starter. He finished third on the team with 32 assists and averaged 2.8 points per game.

Central’s other returning letterwinners include senior guard **Doug Hooker**, junior forwards **Brandon Vos** and **Mark Isaacson** and sophomore forward **Jason Crews**. Crews is the only one of the group that appeared in all 26 games last season, averaging 4.0 points and 2.3 rebounds per game. Vos appeared in 21 games with 11 starts. He averaged 4.4 points and 2.0 rebounds. Isaacson joined the team following the football season and contributed 3.2 points and 2.5 rebounds per game in 22 contests. Hooker averaged 2.5 points in 21 games.

Junior **Seth Quam** and sophomores **Jonathan George**, **Chris Nelson** and **Vince Serrano** all saw limited action last season but look to make a larger contribution this season.

Coe College Kohawks (9-17, 9-9 T-5th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 3/2

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 11/3

About the 2003-04 Kohawks: Coe was expecting to have three returning starters and the Conference's leading scorer to improve on last season's 9-17 record. However, forward **Brandon Sain**, who led the IIAC in scoring with a 15.9 point per game average, will miss the season due to a knee injury.

"We have great team chemistry and a great attitude. We have six seniors that will provide great leadership, but we must overcome two season ending injuries to our big men (Sain and **Phil Bormann**)," **Brent Brase**, in his 11th season as Coe's head coach, said. "We need to be a great defensive team and need to take care of the ball."

Senior forward **Jake Fish** is Coe's top returning scorer. He averaged 9.0 points per game and was 10th in the Conference last season in field goal percentage (50.9 percent). Also back is point guard **Nick Wilkins** who was seventh in the IIAC with 3.15 assists per game. Wilkins led the nation shooting 95.7 percent from the free throw line (66-of-69). He fell one free throw short of tying the NCAA Division III record for consecutive free throws made as he hit 58 straight to start last season.

Joining Wilkins in the backcourt is senior **Luke Niemann** who averaged 5.3 points and 3.8 rebounds per game, and tied Wilkins for the team lead with 31 steals.

Junior center **Seth Hamilton** and sophomore guards **Brad Axdahl** and **Nate Clapham** are the Kohawks top returning players off the bench. Axdahl averaged 4.9 points per game and ranked 15th in the Iowa Conference with 1.23 three-pointers per game. Clapham averaged 3.3 points and handed out 27 assists in 26 games.

Seniors **Jeremy Hopkins**, **Nick Palmer** and **Justin Stanek** will provide the veteran leadership Brase referred to. Last season Stanek saw action in 12 games, Hopkins and Palmer appeared in eight games apiece.

Cornell College Rams
(16-11, 12-6 3rd in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 3/2

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 13/3

About the 2003-04 Rams: Cornell lost two All-Conference performers from last season's 16-11 team, but among the returning players is All-Conference forward **Matt Ditch**, who is one of the top athletes in the Conference. In addition to First Team All-Conference honors in basketball last season, he is a two-time All-Conference performer in football and won the Conference outdoor track and field long jump title.

Ditch ranked fifth in the Iowa Conference last season in scoring (14.0 ppg) and three-point field goals made per game (1.90 3pg). Joining him in the starting line-up are guards **Andy Fox** and **Andrew Peternel**. Fox ranked second in the Conference in steals (1.70 spg), third in assists (4.44 apg) and 28th in scoring (9.7 ppg). Peternel averaged 4.6 points per game last season, shooting 53.5 percent from the floor.

Sophomore forward **Dan McClanahan** came off the bench much of last season and ranked 25th in Conference scoring (10.2 ppg) and 19th in rebounding (5.1 rpg).

Freshman forward **Brandan Shelman** is the Rams' top newcomer.

"We have 25 games schedule and we hope to improve throughout the year," eighth-year head coach **Ed Timm** said.

University of Dubuque Spartans (2-23, 1-17 10th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 2/3

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 3/7

About the 2003-04 Spartans: A young team with only three returning letterwinners, one senior and a new head coach will look to turnaround the Dubuque program that has struggled to just 11 wins in the last three seasons.

“Our ability to compete will depend on how quickly we learn to defend, rebound and take care of the ball,” first-year head coach **Marty McDermott** said. “If we can make progress in these areas we could surprise people.”

Senior guard **J.D. Henderson** is the top returnee to the Spartans line-up. His 7.6 points per game are tops among the returning players and he finished fourth in the Conference last season with a 4.15 assist per game average.

Sophomores **Andy Fisch** and **Greg Mitchell** also return and bring size to the Dubuque line-up. The 6-8, 270-pound Fisch averaged 2.9 points and 1.9 rebounds in 23 games last season off the bench. The 6-6 Mitchell averaged 3.0 points and 1.7 rebounds in 25 games last season including six starts.

Sophomore guard **George Toles** appeared in five games last season, averaging 6.6 points and 2.6 assists per contest.

Senior **Marlon Griffin**, junior **Levi Burkett** and freshmen **Ronny Weihmann**, **Jason Watlington** and **Norris Langford** are Dubuque’s top newcomers looking to contribute.

Loras College Duhawks (17-10, 11-7 4th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 3/2

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 6/6

About the 2003-04 Duhawks: Three things have held true for Loras in the three season's **Chad Walthall** has served as head coach. The Duhawks have finished fourth in the IIAC each season, they have won 11 Conference games each season and they have increased their number of overall victories each season. Loras hopes to improve on the first two trends and maintain the third.

"We have a young team with only two seniors and we have to replace three starters. The development of our young players who will provide minutes off the bench will be the determining factor on how well we stack up with the rest of the Conference," Walthall said.

Loras returns four players that started at various times last season led by All-Conference guard **Bobby Stineman**. He finished sixth in the Conference in assists (3.59 apg) and eighth in free throw percentage (79.1 percent). Stineman also finished third in team scoring with a 9.1 point per game average.

Senior center **Dwayne Penn** returns as the teams leading scorer and 27th ranked scorer in the Conference with a 9.8 point per game average. He shot a Conference-best 64.2 percent from the floor and blocked 0.78 shots per game (10th in IIAC). Penn also averaged 4.9 rebounds per game (third on team).

Junior guard **Jeff Ludovissy** was the team's second leading scorer last season, averaging 9.4 points per game. He was Loras' top outside threat, connecting on 43.7 percent of his three-point attempts, fourth in the Conference.

Sophomore forward **Pete Silvestri** averaged 4.5 points and 3.4 rebounds per game last season in 27 games with nine starts. At 6-9, Silvestri brings size to the middle.

Senior forward **Mike Ernst**, junior guard **Tom Sieverding**, sophomore forward **Greg King** and sophomore guard **Jimmy Ernst** saw limited action last season and will look to make a bigger contribution to the team this season.

Junior **Ron Christians**, sophomores **Gavin Sullivan** and **Matt Murray**, and freshman **Scottie Braden** are Loras' top newcomers.

Luther College Norse (9-17, 8-10 7th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 4/1

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 9/3

About the 2003-04 Norse: Luther lost All-Conference forward **Adam Morrisey** but returns a veteran team with four seniors and three juniors.

“Our veterans have played a lot of minutes the last two years and we feel that they are ‘seasoned’ and can compete with anyone in the IIAC,” **Jeff Olinger**, in his 13th season as head coach at Luther, said. “The key for us will be to have a couple of these returnees have big years this season and for our bench to play at a high level. I expect we will be a strong defensive team and improved rebounding team.”

Leading the list of returnees is senior forward **Jake Lappe** who finished second in team scoring and 21st in the Conference with a 10.5 point per game average. He shot 50.3 percent from the floor, 15th in the IIAC. He also averaged 4.0 rebounds per game, second on the team.

Also returning to the Norse starting line-up is a pair of junior guards, **Brandon Grimm** and **Erik Lowe**. Grimm was the only player to start all 26 games last season. He led the team with 59 assists, ranked fourth in scoring (7.3 ppg) and tied for fourth in rebounding (3.5 rpg). Lowe averaged 6.0 points and 2.8 rebounds per game last season, and finished second on the team with 42 assists.

Sophomore guard **Andy Rump** started 25 of 26 games and returns as the team’s top three-point shooter. He was third in the IIAC in three-point field goals per game (1.96) and 11th in three point field-goal percentage (38.1 percent). Rump averaged 9.8 points per game, 26th in the Conference.

Seniors **Justin Pieper**, **Jerry Koering** and **Tyler Hesseltine**, and junior **Matt Johnson** bring experience to Luther’s line-up. Pieper, a forward, averaged 6.2 points and 3.5 rebounds per game in 26 contests. Koering, a guard, appeared in 21 games averaging 1.9 points per game. Hesseltine, a forward, averaged nearly a point per game in 13 contests. Johnson, a guard, averaged 2.1 points per game in 25 contests.

Simpson College Storm (14-12, 9-9 T-5th in IAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 3/2

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 11/3

About the 2003-04 Storm: Simpson lost forward **Jesse Harris**, a two-time Jostens Trophy finalist as the Division III Player of the Year, to graduation, but the Storm return one of the more veteran teams in the Iowa Conference.

“Our six seniors have been through the wars of the IAC and look to lead a young group of players this season. We had a tough finish to last season. We look forward to the Conference race this season and the opportunity to compete for the IAC Championship,” **Bruce Wilson**, in his 19th season as head coach at Simpson, said. “We have some very good young talent that needs to get playing experience at the college level but it should be a highly competitive season for the Storm.”

Senior forward **Matt Brown**, a Second Team All-Conference selection last season, led the team and ranked eighth in the Conference in scoring (13.6 ppg). He also ranked among the Conference leaders in rebounding (18th, 5.2 rpg), three-point field goal percentage (12th, 35.7 percent) and three-point field goals made (14th, 1.35 3pg).

Senior center **Barry Moore** ranked 23rd in the Conference in scoring (10.3 ppg), fifth in field goal percentage (56.0 percent) and fifth in blocked shots (1.19 bpg). Senior **Ryan Grinstead**, junior **T.J. Irvin**, and **Landon Drake**, and sophomores **Jon Clanton** and **Scott Ellens** return up-front for the Storm.

Senior guard **Dirk Walker** led the Iowa Conference in assists (4.65 apg) and also averaged 5.9 points per game. Senior guard **Josh Richter** averaged 9.0 points per game, led the Iowa Conference three-point field goal percentage (54.9 percent) and was fourth in three-point field goals made (1.92 3pg) in 26 games, all of the bench.

Also returning to the Storm’s backcourt are senior **Nick Boyd** (6.1 ppg, 2.4 rpg) and junior **Mike Martin** (4.5 ppg, 76 assists). Junior guard **Mike Tiedeman** also returns after missing the 2002-03 season. In 2001-02, he averaged 2.6 points per game and dished out 55 assists.

Sophomore **Lucas Cervený** and freshmen **Jason Burkhardt**, **Ryan Hittenmiller** and **Jason Soppe** are Simpson’s top newcomers.

Upper Iowa University Peacocks (8-17, 5-13 T-8th in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 1/4

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 3/6

About the 2003-04 Peacocks: Upper Iowa enters its last season of Iowa Conference competition after reclassifying to NCAA Division II in September. All contests will count as non-Conference games and the Peacocks are not eligible for the IIAC Tournament.

Senior forward **Chris Collins** is the lone returning starter for Upper Iowa and he only started nine of the 24 games in which he played. He averaged 3.4 points and 2.8 rebounds per game. Senior forward **Craig Brown** and sophomore guard **Mike Jackson** are the only two returnees that appeared in all 25 games. Of the returning players, Jackson was tops in scoring (5.7), rebounding (3.3) and assists (2.0 apg). Brown averaged 5.6 points and 1.9 rebounds last season.

Three other returnees that saw limited action last season include senior forward **Nabeel Bhatti**, junior forward **DeLue Miler** and junior guard **Martez Creighton**.

There are 11 freshmen on the Upper Iowa roster that will look to make an immediate impact for fourth-year head coach **Dave Martin** including **Caleb Bassey**, **Zach Collins**, **Dion Coopwood**, **Josh Handke**, **Nick Joyce**, **Ryan Muskeyvalley**, **Alan Seabrooke**, **Greg Stice**, **Jeremiah Thomas**, **Eric Wedgeworth** and **Adam Winters**.

Wartburg College Knights (21-7, 14-4 2nd in IIAC)

Starters Returning/Lost: 2/3

Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 11/4

About the 2003-04 Knights: Wartburg has won 65 games in the last three seasons but lost three All-Conference players and two 1,000-point scorers to graduation.

“We are excited about the progress of our returning players and feel we have a quality group of newcomers. We have made tremendous strides during preseason practice,” seventh-year head coach **Dick Peth** said. “Our players who played supporting roles for us in the past, as well as our newcomers will have an opportunity to prove themselves this year.”

A pair of sophomores are Wartburg’s top returning offensive threats. Guard **Jason Steege** was third in team scoring and ranked 29th in the Conference (9.7 ppg), and was sixth in the Conference in three-point field goal percentage (41.3 percent) coming off the bench in 28 games. Forward **Rance Cartmill** ranked fifth in team scoring (8.8 ppg), and was second in team rebounding (5.3 rpg) and assists (59 assists). He connected on 42.9 percent of his three-point attempts (5th in IIAC).

Senior guard **Matt Amentrout** averaged 4.3 points and 1.6 rebounds per game in 28 contests and is joined in the backcourt by junior guard **Adam Sanchez** who finished third on the team with 57 assists and averaged 3.5 points per game last season. Junior **Alan Johnson** shot 61.8 percent from the floor as one of the Knights’ top players off the bench. He averaged 4.8 points per game.

Wartburg’s top newcomers include sophomore **Jordan Atchison** and freshmen **James Menke**, **Ben Vogel** and **Nick Gullickson**.