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2006 IOWA CONFERENCE MEN'S SOCCER PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Central College is the pick of Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) men's soccer coaches to win the 2006 IIAC title. The Dutch received five of eight first-place votes and two second-place votes, totaling 61 points in the IIAC men's soccer Coaches' Poll.

Two-time defending Conference Champion, Wartburg College, garnered the three remaining first-place votes along with two second-place and two third-place votes, and are second in the Poll with 57 points followed by 2005 IIAC Tournament Champion, Loras College, which is third with 53 points. The complete 2006 IIAC men's soccer Coaches' Poll follows:

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2005 Record
1	Central (5)	61	15-3-1, 6-1-1 IIAC
2	Wartburg (3)	57	18-4-1, 7-1 IIAC
3	Loras	53	18-4-1, 6-1-1 IIAC
4	Simpson	44	6-11-2, 4-4 IIAC
5	Luther	35	9-9-1, 4-4 IIAC
6	Buena Vista	34	6-11-2, 3-4-1 IIAC
7	Dubuque	31	3-12-2, 1-6-1 IIAC
8	Coe	19	3-15, 0-8 IIAC
9	Cornell	18	5-9-3, 3-5 IIAC

New Coaches: **Dan Cotterill**, former head girls coach at Clear Creek-Amana High School, is the new head coach at Cornell. He replaces Curt Lewis who resigned after four seasons.

Conference Tournament: The top-six teams following the regular season round-robin schedule qualify for the 2006 Iowa Conference Tournament with an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament on the line. The quarterfinal matches, played at the #3 and #4 seeds, will be October 31 or November 1. The semifinals and finals are November 3-4, hosted by the women's top seed.

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

Buena Vista returns eight starters and 11 letterwinners from last season's 6-11-2 team that finished sixth in the Conference with a 3-4-1 record. Senior forward/midfielder **Dustin Bonnett**, a two-time All-Conference selection, became the schools career scoring leader midway through his junior season and enters the year with 33 career goals and 76 career points. His 10 career assists are just three shy of the top spot on the school's career scoring list. Last season he finished tied for third in the Conference with 13 goals and sixth with 30 points. Senior midfielder/defender **Jesse Smith** recorded nine points last year including a team-high seven assists (t-5th in IIAC). Senior defenders **Eric Saxton** and **Taylor Jones** will anchor the defense that finished second in the Conference with six shutouts, but must replace three-time All-Conference goalkeeper Daniel Padilla. Saxton was an All-Conference selection last season.

Central returns nine starters and 18 letterwinners from last season's 15-3-1 team that finished second in the Conference with a 6-1-1 record. The Dutch ranked third in the Conference in scoring last season and return three of their top six scorers led by junior midfielder/forward **Cody Stoermer**, a First Team All-Conference and All-Region performer, who had a hand in half of the team's goals. He scored 13 goals and added 10 assists for 36 points, leading the team in all three categories and ranking third in the Conference goals and points, and second in assists. Junior midfielder **Blake Scott** finished fourth in team scoring with 10 points including three goals and four assists. Sophomore midfielder **Cruz Herr** tied for sixth in team scoring with seven points including three goals and one assist. Senior back **Eric Bentzinger** will anchor the defense this season after playing alongside multi-time All-Conference performers the past three years.

Central head coach **Garry Laidlaw** says, "We have graduated some of the best players in the program's history, but we feel good about the core of players returning. This could be the most tightly contested Conference race yet, with the emergence of so many potential contenders in the League."

Coe returns six starters and 10 letterwinners from last season's 3-15 team that finished ninth in the Conference with an 0-8 record. The Kohawks should receive a boost from the return of junior midfielder **Matt Sonntag** who broke his leg in the fifth game of the season and missed the remainder of the year. Senior midfielder **Andrew George** and sophomore forward **William Alt** are Coe's top returning offensive threats. Alt scored three goals and had two assists, in 15 matches primarily coming off the bench. George scored two goals in 14 matches. Seniors **Derek Meier** (midfielder) and **Brandon Bell** (forward) will also be looked to for key contributions this season.

Coe head coach **Donovan Kron** says, "Coe will field its best team in five years."

Cornell returns seven starters and 11 letterwinners from last season's 5-9-3 team that finished seventh in the Conference with a 3-5 record. Junior defender **Cameron Gallegos** was an All-Conference pick in 2004. Last season, he showed his versatility recording two assists and playing one game in goal, recording a 10-save double overtime shutout. Senior forward **Nii Yemofio** led the Rams with five goals and 10 points last season. Senior **Aaron Epstein** recorded three assists from his midfield position.

Dubuque returns seven starters and 12 letterwinners from last season's 3-12-2 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 1-6-1 record. Forward **Nick Cookston**, an All-Conference performer last year as a freshman, scored 11 goals and added three assists to lead the Spartans offense. His 11 goals tied for sixth in the Conference and were nearly half of Dubuque's 23 team total. He was eighth in Conference scoring with 25 points. Senior **Josh Jones** started all 17 games in goal for Dubuque and led the IIAC with 7.0 saves per game. He also recorded two shutouts. Senior midfielder **Clay Johnson** and sophomore defender **Aaron Gray** are other key returnees to the Spartans line-up.

Dubuque head coach **Jason Berna** says, "With a deeper line up and more experienced players this year we will be looking to make a jump to the Conference playoffs in 2006. Several transfers and freshmen will look to make an impact on the field right away."

Loras returns four starters and seven letterwinners from last season's 18-4-1 team that finished third in the Conference with a 6-1-1 record and reached the NCAA "Sweet 16". Two First Team All-Conference performers return to Conference's #1 ranked defense from 2005 – goalkeeper **Kevin Smerko** and senior defender **Nick Anello**, both seniors. Smerko, a Third-Team All-Region selection, was the goalie of record in all 23 matches, posting Conference-bests with a 0.85 goals against average, an .811 save percentage and seven shutouts. Anello scored one goal from his back position. Senior midfielder **Kevin Burberry** and junior forward **Mike Richter** are Loras' top returning offensive threat. Burberry scored all four of his goals in postseason play (three in the Conference Tournament and one in the NCAA Tournament). He also had two assists for 10 points. Richter led the team and was tied for second in the Conference with 10 assists. He also added three goals for 16 points.

Loras head coach **Dan Rothert** says, "The 2005 season was our best ever. We learned a lot as a team last year and are excited to see where the 2006 season will take us. We will be a different team this year, as we graduated eight from the 2005 squad. However, we have a very good core returning, and a great recruiting class. Expect us to be young, but talented...and to rely on our defense which returns all but one starter from last year."

Luther returns seven starters and 16 letterwinners from last season's 9-9-1 team that finished tied for fourth in the Conference with a 4-4 record. The defense will be strong for the Norse led by a trio of juniors – goalkeeper **Leif Madsen**, Second Team All-Conference defender **John Schroeder** and **Dane Jensen**. Madsen started 18 matches last year, posting a 9-8 record with a 1.69 goals against average, a .772 save percentage and four shutouts. He was second in the IIAC in shutouts, third in save percentage and fourth in GAA. Schroeder has started every game in his collegiate career, and last year had a goal and an assist. Jensen was fifth in team scoring last season with four goals and eight points. Senior forward **Steve Kain** is Luther's top returning scorer, finishing third on the team last year with five goals and 12 points.

Luther head coach **Doug Mello** says, "We will be a young team that should improve as the season progresses. We will build around an experienced defense and goalkeeper. Offensive output will be a question mark. Our success will depend on players stepping up to the challenge."

Simpson returns seven starters and 12 letterwinners from last season's 6-11-2 team that finished tied for fourth in the Conference with a 4-4 record. Senior midfielders **Nate Ruhland** and **Mosa Shayan** are the Storm's top returnees, both earning Second Team All-Conference honors last season. Ruhland tied for second on the team with seven goals and was fourth in overall scoring with 15 points. Shayan, who also earned All-Conference honors in 2004, recorded one assist last year from a defensive position.

Simpson head coach **Mike Wilson** says, "We will begin the season with tough regional competition which will help us prepare for the rigors of Conference play. With a solid core returning, our expectations are high as we plan to challenge for the Conference title."

Wartburg returns six starters and 19 letterwinners from last season's 18-4-1 team that finished first in the Conference with a 7-1 record and reached its second straight "Sweet 16". The Knights won their second straight Conference title behind three-time All-Conference forward **Harrison Kibombo-Lugujjo**, the 2004 IIAC MVP, who was the leading scorer on the Conference's top ranked scoring offense last year. He scored an IIAC-best 22 goals and 50 points. He was a First Team All-Region selection after finishing 10th in nation with a 0.96 goal per game average. Junior midfielder **Casey Johnson** led the team with seven assists, tied for fifth in the Conference. He finished third on the team with 19 points and tied for third with six goals. Senior **Joe Hinke** scored five goals and added two assists from his midfield position. All-Conference defender **Brent Schuchmann** will anchor the defense that finished second in Conference allowing just 12.3 shots per game and third with a 1.26 goals against average.

Wartburg head coach **Jim Conlon** says, "If you look at this team, we are pretty strong all the way around. We just need to put the pieces of the puzzle together....getting good players to gel together. I think the seniors can make this happen. We're going to build off the success they've been through the last three seasons."

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