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2007 IOWA CONFERENCE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Central College, which has earned a share of two of the last three Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) football titles, is the coaches' pick to win the 2007 IIAC title. The Dutch received six of eight first place votes, totaling 62 points in the IIAC football Coaches' Poll.

Wartburg College received the two other first-place votes along with five second-place votes, and is second in the poll with 58 points. Coe College is third in the preseason poll with 49 points followed by the University of Dubuque with 45 points. The complete 2007 IIAC football Coaches' Poll follows:

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2006 Record
1	Central (6)	62	10-1, 8-0 IIAC
2	Wartburg (2)	58	8-2, 6-2 IIAC
3	Coe	49	7-3, 5-3 IIAC
4	Dubuque	45	6-4, 5-3 IIAC
5	Buena Vista	36	4-6, 4-4 IIAC
6	Loras	33	4-6, 4-4 IIAC
7	Luther	30	2-8, 1-7 IIAC
8	Simpson	25	3-7, 3-5 IIAC
9	Cornell	14	2-8, 0-8 IIAC

Preseason All-Americans: Three Iowa Conference football players were named to preseason All-America Teams. Luther senior offensive lineman **Jon Stavast** was named to the *Lindy's* First Team and the D3football.com Second Team. Central senior running back and two-time defending league MVP **Vance Schuring** was named to the Second Team Offense by both *Lindy's* and D3football.com. Buena Vista senior linebacker **Cody Pierce** was named to the First Team Defense by *Street & Smith's Football Annual*, while he was named to the Second Team by D3football.com.

Preseason National Polls: Defending Conference Champion Central and runner-up Wartburg are included in multiple preseason national polls. Central is 8th in *USA Today Sports Weekly* and on D3football.com, 9th in *Lindy's* poll, 16th in *Street & Smith's Football Annual*. Wartburg is 17th in *Lindy's* poll, 18th in *Street and Smith's Football Annual*, and 25th on D3football.com.

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

Buena Vista returns 16 starters and 30 letterwinners from last season's 4-6 team that finished fifth in the Conference with a 4-4 record. The Beavers return eight on the defensive side of the ball led by seniors **Cody Pierce** at linebacker and **Michael Sly** at strong safety. Pierce and Sly, both First Team All-Conference selections last year, ranked first and second on the team with 137 and 84 tackles, respectively, and had team-highs with 15.0 and 12.5 tackles for loss, which ranked fifth and seventh in the Conference. Leading the way on the defensive line is senior defensive end **Dave Bredehoft**, who finished fourth on the team in 2006 with 52 tackles, including 8.0 tackles for loss.

The offense also returns eight starters, including senior quarterback **Chris Hawkins**, who ranked third in the Conference in passing yards (1,935 yards), fourth in total offense (1,839 yards), and fifth in pass efficiency (110.0). Senior wide receiver **Randy Kaufmann** is also back after hauling in 36 catches for 643 yards and a league-high ten touchdowns in 2006. **Mark Hobart**, a senior offensive lineman, is a two-year starter and is the leader of the offense.

Buena Vista head coach **Jay Anderson** says, "We have a great nucleus returning from the 2006 season. Our focus in camp will be on fundamentals, running the football on offense and stopping the run on defense. With 25 Seniors, I feel like we have an outstanding group of leaders."

Central returns 14 starters and 40 letterwinners from last season's 10-1 team that finished first in the Conference with a 8-0 record. The Dutch captured its Conference record 28th IIAC title last year and made its NCAA record-tying 18th playoff appearance, picking up a trio of overtime wins in league play along the way (Wartburg, Luther, Coe). Key contributors return at all offensive skill positions led by two-time reigning IIAC Most Valuable Player **Vance Schuring**, a senior running back. He rushed for a Conference-best 1,199 yards on 252 carries, leading the league in rushing for the second consecutive season despite missing one game. He finished third in the IIAC with an average of 132.0 all purpose yards per game and eighth in total offense with 123.1 yards per game en route to becoming just the third player in IIAC football history to earn back-to-back MVP honors (Brad Jorgensen, Simpson, 1996-97; Frederick Jackson, Coe, 2001-02). Senior quarterback **Tim Connell**, a Second Team All-Iowa Conference honoree, completed 141-of-236 passes for 1,514 yards and eight touchdowns. He was also Central's second leading rusher with 470 yards and three touchdowns on 107 carries. The Dutch return three of their top four receivers from 2006, including senior **Cody Huisman**, who hauled in a team-high 40 passes for 552 yards and three scores. Fellow senior **Josh Smith** finished third on the team with 23 catches for 233 yards and two touchdowns, while Schuring added 12 catches for 121 yards out of the backfield.

A quartet of All-Conference selections lead the defense. Senior linebacker **Andrew Lehn**, a repeat First Team pick, finished tied for fifth in the Conference with 103 tackles including 45 solo. He also had 6.5 tackles for loss, 2.5 sacks and two interceptions. Picked as a Second Team All-Conference return specialist, senior cornerback **Brett Doud** averaged 27.5 yards per kick return and 9.0 yards per punt return while also snagging a team-best four interceptions on defense. Senior stinger **Dustyn Baethke**, named to the All-IIAC Second Team, finished fourth on the team with 56 tackles, 3.0 tackles for loss and two interceptions from his linebacker/defensive end/strong safety hybrid position. Senior defensive lineman **Nick Mulder**, a Second Team selection, made 15 solo tackles with 12 assists and recorded a team-high 6.5 sacks along with seven tackles for loss.

Central head coach **Jeff McMartin** says, "We had a good season and we're fortunate enough to have a lot of people back, so there are high expectations. But we realize we played in three overtime games last year and we can't take anything for granted. Our guys know they're going to play in some big, close and exciting games. I think it's just something we have to prepare them for because there's not going to be an easy game on the schedule."

Coe returns 10 starters and 24 letterwinners from last season's 7-3 team that finished in a tie for third in the Conference with a 5-3 record. For the second consecutive year, Coe was the only Iowa Conference school to rank in the top half of the Conference in rushing, passing, total and scoring offense and rushing, passing, total and scoring defense. The Coe defense had four All-Conference picks last year and two return to take the field for the Kohawks in 2007. Up front, senior defensive lineman **Steve Strope**, a Second Team pick last year, returns after piling up 32 tackles and 7.5 tackles for loss. Senior strong safety **Jeremy Squires**, another Second Team selection, finished fourth on the team with 52 tackles while also pulling down a Conference-high six interceptions. Junior cornerback **Tom Breitbach** was fifth on the team with 47 tackles and broke up a team-high ten passes, including four interceptions. Senior linebacker **Brad Hemesath** also returns after finishing second on the team with 60 tackles.

The Kohawk offense returns seven letterwinners and only two starters, but has as experienced field general in senior quarterback **Andy TeKippe**. TeKippe, a First Team All-Conference selection in 2005 who led the Conference with a 129.8 pass efficiency, and ranked second in passing yards (225.8/game) and total offense (257.0/game), was limited to just two games in 2006. Senior left tackle **Nick Leerhoff** is the only other returning starter on offense.

Coe head coach **Erik Raeburn** says, "We are excited to get started."

Cornell returns 21 starters and 35 letterwinners from last season's 2-8 team that finished eighth in the Conference with an 0-8 record. Junior running back **Travion Hardman** will lead the offense behind holes created by sophomore fullback **Mike Thompson** and senior tackles **Heath Sienknecht** and **Shane Eaglin**. Hardman led the Rams with 700 rushing yards and 752 all-purpose yards en route to Second Team All-Conference honors as a sophomore. He ranked seventh in the Conference in rushing. Thompson finished second on the team in rushing (411 yards), receiving (19 receptions, 143 yards) and third in all-purpose yards (554 yards). Senior wide receiver **Josh Youngblood** led the team in receiving in 2006, hauling in 34 passes for 399 yards and a score. Youngblood also averaged 17.5 yards per kick return and 6.0 yards per punt return, among the team leaders.

A pair of linebackers will lead Cornell's defense. Senior linebacker **Chris Gustafson** led the Conference with 113 tackles last season, earning Second Team All-Conference honors in the process. He also had 7.5 tackles for loss. Junior **Leif Goleman** finished second on the team with 62 tackles, 3.0 tackle for loss. Up front, senior **Jason Williams** returns at defensive end after a 35 tackle, 5.0 tackle for loss, 2.0 sack season. Senior **James Riessen** and sophomore **Don Bladt** hold down the defensive secondary. Riessen finished third on the team with 59 tackles, including 2.5 for loss. Bladt, who started as a freshman last season, was fifth on the team with 48 stops and made a team-high eight pass break-ups.

Cornell head coach **Matt Dillon** says, "Our coaching staff worked tremendously hard to bring in a class of talented players. We have 67 players that are expected to report to camp and we're excited about that. Our team depth will be much better off this season, not just in numbers, but also in quality. The players we have coming back (20 of 24 starters) and the large group of newcomers (30) really bodes well for us. We should be much better from top to bottom."

Dubuque returns 17 starters and 45 letterwinners from last season's 6-4 team that finished tied for third in the Conference with a 5-3 record, posting the school's first top-division IIAC finish since 1987. The Conference's second-ranked passing offense returns a number of its key personnel led by senior quarterback **Jermar Jackson**, senior lineman **Mike Fielding**, junior wide receiver **Ed McIntosh** and junior running back **Brandon Clayton**. Jackson, a Second Team All-Conference selection, completed 175-of-336 passes for 2,096 yards and 14 touchdowns. He finished second in the Conference in passing yards and total offense (2,798). He was also the Spartans' second-leading rusher, picking up 702 yards and 13 touchdowns on 173 carries. McIntosh, another Second Team All-IIAC selection, led the team in receiving with 57 catches for 738 yards and six touchdowns. Clayton led the team in rushing with 156 carries for 808 yards and five touchdowns.

Two seniors and two juniors will lead the Spartans defense that ranked fourth last year. Senior free safety **Mark Mashburn**, a First Team All-Conference selection, finished with 140 tackles and 88 solo stops, leading Division III in both categories. Mashburn is joined in the defensive backfield by junior strong safety **Orlando Walton**. Walton, who made 40 tackles and three interceptions last season on the football field, was named the Most Valuable Performer after sweeping the 100- and 200-meter dash crowns at the 2007 IIAC Outdoor Track and Field Championships in May. Senior inside linebacker **Floyd Pinckney** finished second on the team with 72 tackles. He also had 8.0 tackles for loss and 5.5 sacks. Junior defensive lineman **Travis Strowbridge** collected 50 tackles and a team-high 12.5 tackles for loss.

Dubuque head coach **Vince Brautigam** says, "We will rely on our large senior class to continue the momentum from the 2006 season."

Loras returns 16 starters and 26 letterwinners from last season's 4-6 team that finished tied for fifth in the Conference with a 4-4 record. Senior linebacker **Brock Hall**, a 2006 First Team All-Conference selection, led the team with 113 tackles, which ranked third in the Conference. He also had 13.5 tackles for loss and five sacks. Fellow linebacker **Andy Zeal**, also a senior, finished seventh on the team with 40 tackles and also collected three interceptions and a sack. Senior defensive end **Justin Sparrgrove** posted 42 tackles, including 12 for loss, and a team-high 7.5 sacks, which ranked third in the IIAC.

The Duhawks' offensive effort will be led by senior quarterback **Matt McLaughlin**. McLaughlin threw for 1,654 yards and eight touchdowns and also finished sixth in the league in total offense (1,639 yards). Senior **Tim Andrews** returns at fullback after rushing for 117 yards on 14 carries in 10 games last season. Andrews also caught five balls for 49 yards out of the backfield. Senior **Bob Roe**, who started eight games at left tackle last season, will anchor the offensive line.

Loras head coach **Steve Osterberger** says, "This season is going to be exciting. We bring back some guys who can make plays on defense and I'm excited about the offense, too. The conference is going to be a real battle every week, we just need to focus on what we're doing and execute our game plan as best we can."

Luther returns 15 starters and 33 letterwinners from last season's 2-8 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 1-7 record. The Norse led the league in total offense and passing offense and third in rushing offense and scoring offense, one of three Iowa Conference schools to rank in the top half of all four categories (Coe, Dubuque). Preseason All-American senior **Jon Stavast**, a three-time All-Iowa Conference honoree, anchors the offensive line from his guard position. He will be joined in the trenches by **Phil Sadler**. The Luther offense should be bolstered by the return of senior running back **Tyler Sherden**. Sherden, a 2004 First Team All-Conference selection, returns to the lineup after missing all of last season due to injury. Sherden enters the season in 10th place on Luther's all-time rushing list with 1,787 yards and 25 touchdowns. Wide receiver **Tony Brantner** was third on the team a year ago with 29 catches for 337 yards and four touchdowns.

Six seniors return defensively, led by linebackers **Marcus Hendrickson** and **Brandt Rost** and defensive back **Mike Tangen**. Hendrickson led the team with 93 tackles, a number that also ranked eighth in the Iowa Conference. Rost posted 27 tackles and 1.5 tackles for loss. Tangen, a three-year starter at defensive back, finished fourth on the team with 46 tackles and picked off a team-high three passes. He also returns kicks and led the IIAC with a 14.2 return average in 2006.

Luther head coach **Paul Hefty** says, "It is a great challenge to compete in the Iowa Conference, we are looking to improve and be consistent every Saturday this fall!"

Simpson returns 11 starters and 33 letterwinners from last season's 3-7 team that finished seventh in the Conference with a 3-5 record. Junior running back **Adam Reutzel** earned All-Conference honors as a freshman and will lead the Storm offense in 2007. Reutzel led the Storm in rushing for the second consecutive season with 527 yards on 140 carries, ranking ninth in the Conference. The offensive line, anchored by senior right guard **Landon Lewellen**, returns four of five starters but will still be relatively young. The other three returning linemen are sophomores that each started at least seven games last season. Senior **Bill Nelson** handled both punting and kicking duties last year, finishing 31st in Division III in punting with a 37.5 yards per punt average, fourth in the Conference. He kicked a school-record 51-yard field goal against Bethel Sept. 9 and connected on a school-record three field goals against Concordia (Wis.) Sept. 2. He also connected on 14-of-15 PATs during the year.

Both the defensive line and defensive backfield were hit hard by graduation. Up front, junior nose guard **Luke Stover** is the lone returning starter. Stover posted 43 tackles, 8.5 for loss, with 2.5 sacks and an interception. In the secondary, senior cornerback **Drew Lipovac** is the lone starter to return. Lipovac led the team with eight pass breakups while accumulating 53 tackles and three interceptions. Senior **Blair Belland** returns at linebacker after charting 56 tackles, 3.5 for loss, one sack and one interception in 2006.

Simpson head coach **Jay Niemann** says, "We are looking to improve."

Wartburg returns 12 starters and 34 letterwinners from last season's 8-2 team that finished second in the Conference with a 6-2 record. In the offensive backfield, senior running back **Josh Van Rees** steps in after finishing second on the team with 458 rushing yards and six touchdowns on 107 carries in 2006 to finish 10th in the IAC in rushing. Senior wide receiver **Kyle Duchman** had team-highs with 28 receptions and 282 yards last season. Senior offensive linemen **Ben Hogan** and **Mike Wubben** anchor an offensive line that finished first in the Conference in rushing offense last season, averaging 197.3 yards per game on the ground. Hogan was a 2006 First Team All-Conference selection.

The Knights' had five All-Conference performers on the defense that led the IAC in total defense, scoring defense, and rush defense, and finished third in pass defense. All of those players return led by two-time First Team All-Conference selection **Nick Weber**. Weber, a senior selected as a cornerback last season, made 47 tackles on defense while also seeing time on offense and special teams. Junior strong safety **Jason Lansing** was Wartburg's leading tackler a year ago, making 69 stops en route to Second Team All-Conference honors. Senior defensive end **Eric Bruhn**, another Second Team selection, anchors the defensive line after picking up 34 tackles. Junior linebackers **Ryan Gerardy** and **Kyle Goodchild** lead an experienced and deep linebacking corps. Gerardy and Goodchild, both Second Team selections a year ago, finished with 60 and 51 tackles, respectively. Gerardy also added team-highs with 10 tackles for loss and 4.5 sacks.

Wartburg head coach **Eric Koehler** says, "Given our team will be more experienced in 2007, we hope we are able to compete at a high level, week in and week out, in the always challenging IAC."

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