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2007 IOWA CONFERENCE WOMEN'S SOCCER PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Loras College, winners of four of the last six Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) women's soccer championships, is the coaches' pick to win the 2007 IIAC title. The Duhawks received seven of eight first-place votes and one second-place vote, totaling 71 points in the IIAC women's soccer Coaches' Poll.

Wartburg College, which picked up one first-place vote, two second-place votes, four third-place votes, and a fourth-place vote for 59 points, edged defending Conference champion Simpson College, which picked up the remaining first-place vote and 58 points. Luther College took fourth in the poll with 53 points. The complete 2007 IIAC women's soccer Coaches' Poll follows.

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2006 Record
1	Loras (7)	71	11-8-2, 7-1 IIAC
2	Wartburg (1)	59	11-8-1, 4-3-1 IIAC
3	Simpson (1)	58	11-5-3, 7-0-1 IIAC
4	Luther	53	11-6-4, 5-2-1 IIAC
5	Dubuque	46	9-10, 3-5 IIAC
6	Central	34	8-9-1, 2-6 IIAC
7	Cornell	31	7-9-2, 2-4-2 IIAC
8	Coe	28	7-10-1, 3-5 IIAC
9	Buena Vista	16	2-14-2, 0-7-1 IIAC

Conference Tournament: The season begins Friday, August 31, with five teams in action. The Iowa Conference schedule begins Saturday, September 22, with a full slate of four games. The top-six teams following the regular season round-robin schedule qualify for the 2007 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 30 or 31. The semifinals and finals are November 2-3, hosted by the men's top seed.

New Coaches: **Hunter Balmer**, who has served as the top assistant for both the Buena Vista men's and women's soccer programs each of the past two seasons, has assumed leadership of the Beaver women's program replacing Matt Klosterman, who left in the spring to accept the head men's soccer position at North Central (Ill.). **Homer Screws**, head men's coach at Coe from 1992-98, returns to the Cedar Rapids school after spending the last several years coaching club soccer in Eastern Iowa. He replaces Donovan Kron who resigned after three seasons. **Michael Joyce**, an assistant coach with Cornell's men's program last season, takes over the Ram women's soccer. He replaces co-coaches Mike Robertson and Steve Robertson.

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

Buena Vista returns five starters and seven letterwinners from last season's 2-14-2 team that finished ninth in the Conference with a 0-7-1 record. Junior defenders **Jessica Weismann** and **Jessica Cannova** will be anchoring the defense, while senior **Michaela Monjarez** is looking to be one of the key playmakers in the midfield. Monjarez tied for third on the team in scoring with five points on two goals and an assist. Senior **Dani Miller**, the program's all-time leading scorer, is looking to cap off her career with another solid season at forward. Miller scored one goal and two assists last season and is the school's career-leading goal-scorer with 12.

Buena Vista head coach **Hunter Balmer** says, "The Buena Vista women's soccer program is anticipating a strong season with the goal of reaching our first ever Iowa Conference Tournament. We have great leadership in our upperclassmen and a solid, talented freshman class that gives us the depth we were missing last season. Though we lost some very strong players, this year's team is ready to step up and fill those leadership roles. I am extremely excited heading into my first year at the helm because I see the growth of this program and the success that they are so close to having. There is a great deal of optimism and enthusiasm in this year's team, and we are hoping to ride that all the way to the post-season."

Central returns nine starters and 13 letterwinners from last season's 8-9-1 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 2-6 record. For the second straight year, Central got off to a strong start in opening six wins and a tie in its first nine games. Senior forward **Tori Rittman** is the offensive leader of the team after finishing 2006 fourth in the IIAC in goals with 12 and fifth in points with 28, but sophomore forward **Kelli Hancock** emerged as another offensive threat with eight goals and four assists in her first season in a Dutch uniform. Senior midfielder **Stephanie Ellwanger** was the team's third-leading scorer with 14 points on six goals and two assists. Senior goalkeeper **Michelle Gilbert** transitions back to the net this season to fill the vacancy created by three-time All-Conference goalkeeper Ashley Veigelt. She will battle with sophomore **Abby Marshall** for the starting spot. Marshall played in five games last season allowing one goal in just over 138 minutes of play.

Central head coach **Rick Burns** says, "Central will be stronger in attack and weaker in defense. We have holes to plug, but have some enticing players that may fill them."

Coe returns seven starters and all 10 letterwinners from last season's 7-10-1 team that finished tied for sixth in the Conference with a 3-5 record. The Kohawks lost a number key players due to graduation but return four of the top five scorers from 2006, including senior midfielder/forward **Jenny McArdle**. McArdle, a two-time All-Conference pick, led the team with nine goals and seven assists for 25 points, ranking tied for eighth in the IIAC in points and goals and tied for ninth in assists. She also posted four game-winning goals. Junior forward **Kristen Carpenter** was second on the team with six goals and 15 points. Sophomore goalkeeper **Erin Ridley** played 1205 minutes last season, posting 103 saves, a .687 save percentage, and a 3.51 goals-against average. Senior midfielder/defender **Kelsey Cannon** was fourth on the team with six points, including three assists. Junior defender **Emily Thomas** started 17 of 18 games last season, notching one assist from the backfield.

Coe head coach **Homer Screws** says, "I am excited about the incoming team and our chance of making a return to the Iowa Conference playoffs."

Cornell returns 10 starters and 17 letterwinners from last season's 7-9-2 team that finished fifth in the Conference with a 2-4-2 record. The Rams return more than half of its scoring offense as juniors **Brianna Wallace** and **Sara Bleeker** combined for 18 of the team's 29 goals from their forward and midfield positions, respectively, as sophomores. Bleeker, a Second Team All-Conference selection, tied for sixth in the Conference with 11 goals, including four game winners. She also toed for sixth in the IIAC with 28 points. Wallace, also a Second Team honoree, finished second on the team with seven goals and 20 points. Sophomore defender **Amanda Higgenbotham**, who notched four assists last season, will anchor the defense. Senior goalkeeper **Shawna Becker** begins her fourth year starting in goal for the Rams. Becker, who posted 138 saves and a 2.01 goals-against average in 2006, has played in over 82 percent of minutes possible during her career, including all but seven minutes, seven seconds last season.

Cornell head coach **Mike Joyce** says, "We have a lot of talent returning along with a large incoming freshman class. We should be extremely competitive and entertaining to watch."

Dubuque returns seven starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 9-10-0 team that finished fifth in the Conference with a 3-5-0 record. Senior center midfielder **Caitlin Tero**, a three-time First Team All-Conference performer, posted 12 goals and 16 assists for 40 points on a Spartan team that led the IIAC in points, goals, goals per game, assists, and assists per game. Tero led the IIAC in assists, ranked fourth in points and tied for fourth in goals. Junior outside midfielder **Sarah Shelander** scored one goal in seven games, while junior defender **Ashley Bussan** notched two assists from the backfield last season.

Dubuque head coach **Jason Berna** says, "The UD women's team will have a ton of young players added to the roster, but will look to continue our tough play and goal scoring ways in 2007. This group of talented young players will look to boost the Spartans back into the top four in conference. Everyone coming in and returning is committed to having our best season this year."

Loras returns 10 starters and 18 letterwinners from last season's 11-8-2 team that finished second in the Conference with a 7-1 record. Three-time First Team All-Conference **Lauren Schaefflein** returns to lead a defense that tied for second in the conference in goals allowed with 21. Junior defender **Jenna Kosek**, an All-Conference selection in 2005, scored an assist and was named team most valuable player. Goalkeeper **Torey Murray** posted a 10-7-2 record with an 0.80 goals against average and an .831 save percentage as a sophomore. Murray led the IIAC in GAA, was second in shutouts (0.45) and third in save percentage. The Duhawks are led up front by senior All-Conference midfielders **Maria Prendergast**, **Katee Whitney**, and **Katie Ryan**. Prendergast, a First Team selection, recorded 15 points on six goals and three assists last year. Whitney, another First Team honoree, notched six goals for 12 points. Ryan, a Second Team selection, tied for the team-lead in points with 15 points on three goals and nine assists.

Loras head coach **Dan Rotherth** says, "Last year we survived a rash of injuries and were able to win the IIAC tournament and advance to the NCAA tournament for the 6th consecutive year. If we can stay healthy this year, we like our chances, but know we always have a bulls-eye on our back". We play arguably one of the toughest non-conference schedules in the country (includes 7 NCAA teams from 2006), so we should be well seasoned for conference play. With a great senior class leading the way, we are excited start the season and see where this team can go."

Luther returns seven starters and 17 letterwinners from last season's 11-6-4 team that finished third in the Conference with a 5-3-1 record. First Team All-Conference selection **Emily Ironside**, a junior forward, led the team in scoring with seven goals and nine assists for 23 points. Ironside's assist total ranked eighth in the IIAC, while her point total ranked tenth. The Norse will be led in the midfield by a pair of Second Team All-Conference selections in **Kendra Dornfield** and **Andrea Martinson**, both sophomores. Dornfield finished last season ranked third on the team with five goals and 12 points, while Martinson added two assists in 20 games. Senior defender **Kalli Ledel** is a four-year starter who will help anchor the defense. Junior defender **Sara Walters** also returns after having her 2006 season cut short by an injury. In just ten games, Walters scored four goals.

Luther head coach **Doug Mello** says, "The potential of our '07 squad is unlimited. Nine solid starters and an array of talented new recruits return to a young and exciting Norse team. Look for a solid defense, a possession-minded midfield, and creative goal scorers on attack fighting for the conference title."

Simpson returns five starters and 10 letterwinners from last season's 11-5-3 team that captured its second Iowa Conference championship with a 7-0-1 record. Junior goalkeeper **Whitney Franker**, a 2006 First Team All-Conference selection, anchored the defense last year that was third in the Conference with a 1.11 goals against average. Franker finished second in the IIAC in save percentage (.853) and ranked third with a 1.09 GAA. She posted seven shutouts a year ago to set the school record for career shutouts with 15. Sophomore defender **Heather Akes** will anchor the backline. A First Team All-IIAC honoree, Akes posted one goal and two assists in 19 games. Joining Akes will be junior **Johnna Kripal**. Kripal was fourth on the team in assists with three. Sophomore midfielder **Mollie McMahon** will play primarily in the offensive end of the field where she recorded one goal and one assist in 2006.

Simpson head coach **Cory Chapman** said, "We'll have a new look to the 2007 team as a result of 6 key losses to our lineup. Our young team will work hard and once again look to our goalkeeping and strong back line to keep ourselves in matches."

Wartburg returns eight starters and 18 letterwinners from last season's 11-8-1 team that finished fourth in the Conference with a 4-3-1 record. Five of the team's top six scorers from 2006 return, led by junior forward **Rachel Oswald**, who was named Second Team All-Conference after leading the Knights in scoring for the second consecutive year. Oswald tied for fifth in the league with 28 points, sixth in goals with 11, and added six assists. Senior defender **Katelin Gannon** scored nine goals and totaled 19 points to rank third on the team. Gannon was a First Team All-IIAC selection in 2006. Junior **Katie Krei** and sophomore **Logan Webb**, a Second Team All-Conference performer last year, return to anchor the defense.

Wartburg head coach **Jim Conlon** says, "The parity in the IIAC has increased in the last few years for both the men and the women. It is going to be a dogfight by many teams to win the 2007 title."

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