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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 11, 2007

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IOWA CONFERENCE WOMEN'S TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . The 2007 Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) women's tennis Championship begins this weekend, October 12-13, with the Individual Tournament at Coe College's Clark Racquet Center, Veterans Memorial Park and Jefferson High School, all in Cedar Rapids. All nine Conference schools will participate in the Individual Tournament, while six schools will advance to a Dual Team Tournament October 19-20 at the University of Iowa Tennis Courts in Iowa City to determine the 2007 IIAC Champion.

Ch-Ch-Changes: There are three significant changes associated with this year's women's tennis Championship. The first significant change involves the format of the Individual Tournament. This year's tournament will feature three singles flights and two doubles flights instead of six singles flights and three doubles flights as in the past.

Also, in a change from the past few years, this weekend's Individual Tournament will have no direct impact on the seeding for next weekend's six-team Dual Tournament, which will be conducted by a vote of the Conference tennis coaches conducted following the conclusion of the Individual Tournament.

And finally, unlike last season, the Conference's automatic bid to the 2008 NCAA Division III Women's Tennis Championship is not on the line over the next two weekends. Instead, the top four teams from the Team Tournament will advance to an Automatic Qualifier Tournament next April to determine who will earn the league's automatic bid to the NCAA Championship.

Individual Flighted Tournament: Individuals are placed in flights based on the players' strength. The draw for the singles and doubles Tournaments are attached and can also be found on the Iowa Conference web site.

The Individual Flighted Tournament begins at 8:30 a.m. on Friday and 9:00 a.m. on Saturday. Brackets will be completed through the quarterfinals on Friday with Flight A matches at Coe, and Flight B and C matches at Veterans. First round matches in Flight B singles will be held at Jefferson High School. All of Saturday's matches will be at Coe. Weather could force changes to the schedule. Any changes will be posted on the Iowa Conference web site at www.iowaconference.com.

Quarterfinalists in Flight A singles and semifinalists in Flight A doubles are deemed All-Conference.

2006 Individual Tournament Recap: Luther captured four individual titles to Central's one, but runner-up finishes at No. 2 and No. 5 singles and all three doubles positions allowed the Dutch to tie the Norse for the top seed in the Team Tournament with 67 points each. With two titles and three second-place finishes Cornell captured the third seed with 66 points, while Coe rounded out the field for the Team Tournament with 62 points after picking up two individual titles.

Top Returning Individuals: Sixteen singles players and 16 doubles players that finished in the top-four of their flight at last year's Conference Championship return this year. Those numbers do not include two-time defending Conference MVP **Molly Fiala** of Coe who participated in the ITA National Small-College Championships last season and did play in last year's Individual Tournament.

Fiala, the top seed, will be joined in Flight A by Cornell's **Pavla Brachova** and Coe's **Andrea Schupbach**, who finished second and third, respectively, at No. 1 singles in 2006. Coe's **Hillary Allen**, Central's **Hilary Baehr**, and Luther's **Molly Beyer** – the top three finishers at No. 2 singles last year – will also participate in the flight, as will Wartburg's **Sara Bickford** (4th at No. 3 singles), Loras' **Alisha Espey** (2nd at No. 4), Luther's **Amy Christensen** (1st at No. 5), Central's **Faith Bliss** (2nd at No. 5), Cornell's **Caryl Abeyta** (3rd at No. 5), Coe's **Katie Yakes** (4th at No. 5), Central's **Jennifer Knobbe** (3rd at No. 6), and Coe's **Megan Fiala** (4th at No. 6).

Fiala is seeded first in the draw, while teammate **Hannah Jensen** is second. Beyer and Wartburg's **Molly Eslick** are the third seeds and Hillary Allen, Schupbach, Luther's **Alana Humpal**, and Brachova are each seeded fourth.

Luther's **Justine Allen** and Cornell's **Becky Birkhofer** – the top two finishers at No. 6 singles last season – return in Flight B, as does Central's **Whitney Visser**, the fourth-place finisher at No. 4.

Coe's Molly Fiala and Schupbach, semifinalists at last month's ITA Midwest Region Championships, captured the top seed in Flight A Doubles. Luther's Beyer and **Brynne Zinnecker** are seeded second, while Cornell's Brachova and Abeyta are seeded third. Brachova was one-half of last year's championship tandem at No. 1 doubles, while Beyer captured part of the title at No. 2 doubles. Wartburg's Eslick and **Emily Heying** were awarded the fourth and final seed.

Last year's champions at No. 3 doubles – Luther's **Kelsie Allen** and Amy Christensen – are also in the A Doubles draw. Central's Knobbe and Bliss, runners-up with different partners at No. 1 and No. 3 doubles, respectively, are paired together this year while Dutch players Baehr and **Katie Mokelstad**, runners-up at No. 2 doubles in 2006, are each in the 2007 A Doubles draw with another partner. The Simpson tandem of Jessica Nims and Martha Davis (3rd at No. 2) and the Coe pair of **Kara Klein** and Megan Fiala (3rd at No. 3) both return intact in 2007.

Team Championship: The six-team Dual Tournament, which will be seeded by a vote of the Conference women's tennis coaches following this weekend's Individual Tournament, will take place October 19-20 at the University of Iowa Courts in Iowa City.

Defending champion Coe College has the only unblemished mark in the Conference at 10-0 overall and 8-0 in IIAC play. Luther College wrapped up its fall schedule with a 10-1 mark overall and a 6-1 mark in league play with their only loss coming to the Kohawks. Central College sits third at 9-3 overall and 6-2 in the Conference, just ahead of Wartburg College (7-4, 4-3 IIAC), Simpson College (7-8, 5-4 IIAC), and Cornell College (7-7, 3-4 IIAC). Loras College (6-10, 3-6 IIAC), University of Dubuque (4-7, 2-8 IIAC) and Buena Vista University (1-12, 0-9 IIAC) round out the Iowa Conference standings.

The dual matches will start with doubles and conclude once a team wins five points and are played out to determine place finishes one through six. All matches will take place at the University of Iowa Tennis Courts with the exception of Saturday's fifth-place match, which will be at Clark Racquet Center in Cedar Rapids at 9 a.m.

2006 Team Tournament Recap: Despite entering last year's Team Tournament as the #4-seed, Coe won its first Iowa Conference women's tennis Championship, defeating Cornell, 5-1, in the Championship match at Clark Racquet Center on Coe's Campus in Cedar Rapids and earned the Conference's automatic bid to the NCAA women's tennis Championship. Coe became just the third school to win an IIAC women's tennis title in the 25-year history of the Championship. The Kohawks defeated the other two schools with titles en route to theirs. Luther, the top-seed, had won 23 of the previous 24 Championships and was defeated by Coe in the semifinals. Cornell, the #3-seed, won the Conference title in 2001.

Previous IIAC women's tennis Championship results can be found at:
<http://www.iowaconference.com/women/tennis/tournaments.htm>.

The brackets for the 2007 Individual Championship are attached. The bracket for the Team Championship will be released on the Iowa Conference web site (www.iowaconference.com) on Monday, October 15.