



222 Third Street SE Ste. 423
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401
[Phone] (319) 366-4845
[Fax] (319) 366-4911
www.iowaconference.com

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Contact: Joshua Schroeder
jschroeder@iowaconference.com
319-366-4845

2009 IOWA CONFERENCE BASEBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Wartburg College, which earned a share of its 12th consecutive Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) baseball title last year, is atop the 2009 IIAC Baseball Preseason Coaches Poll. The Knights received six first-place votes for a total of 70 points.

Luther College received the three remaining first-place votes and is second in the Poll with 60 points. Coe College is third in the poll with 57 points followed by Simpson College with 53 points. Loras College, which played seven games in last year's IIAC Tournament and forced a second championship game against Wartburg after entering as the fifth seed, is picked fifth with 46 points.

The complete 2009 IIAC baseball Coaches' Poll follows.

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2008 Record
1	Wartburg (6)	70	(27-13, 17-3 IIAC)
2	Luther (3)	60	(17-18, 11-10 IIAC)
3	Coe	57	(22-20, 13-10 IIAC)
4	Simpson	53	(26-16, 14-9 IIAC)
5	Loras	46	(23-23, 11-12 IIAC)
6	Central	37	(22-21, 10-13 IIAC)
7	Buena Vista	33	(17-17, 8-12 IIAC)
8	Dubuque	21	(14-25, 7-16 IIAC)
9	Cornell	19	(13-16, 7-13 IIAC)

Conference Schedule: The Conference schedule was expanded to 24 games in 2007. Schools will play a three-game series against each Conference opponent. Two of those series will be weekday series with a seven-inning doubleheader on Tuesday and a single nine-inning game the following Wednesday at opposite sites. The remaining series will be played on Friday-Saturday at the same site. A single nine-inning game will be played on Friday followed by a seven-inning doubleheader on Saturday.

Conference Tournament: The 2009 Iowa Conference Baseball Tournament hosted by Wartburg College will be held May 7-9 in Cedar Rapids. The top two teams from the regular season will receive a first round bye and the Tournament schedule will feature four games on Thursday, four games on Friday and two, possibly three, games on Saturday.

The No. 3-seed will play the No. 6-seed at 1:00 p.m. Thursday at Veterans Memorial Stadium with the winner playing the No. 2-seed at 4:00 p.m. at Veterans. The No. 4-seed will play the No. 5-seed at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday at Daniels Park (home field of Coe College) with the winner advancing to play the top-seed at 7:00 p.m. at Veterans. All remaining games are scheduled to be played at Veterans Stadium, home of the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim's Midwest League affiliate, Cedar Rapids Kernels.

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

Buena Vista University Beavers
2008 Record: 17-17 overall, 8-12 IIAC (7th)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 15/8
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 11/5

Players to Watch

Brandon Pietrzyk, Sr., OF/RHP – A First Team All-Iowa Conference selection last season, Pietrzyk started all 34 games for the Beavers, hitting .305 with a league-high 12 home runs. He also had team-highs with 33 RBI and 33 runs scored, and ranked second on the team with 36 hits. He also made only two errors in 61 chances.

Mark Blum, Jr., 3B – Blum hit .291 in 30 games with 30 hits, 21 runs scored, 10 RBI, and eight doubles. He also started four games on the mound, posting a 2-0 record with a 3.93 ERA and eight strikeouts.

Michael Hoffman, So., OF – Hoffman appeared in 26 games, hitting .382 with 29 hits and 20 RBI. He ranked fourth on the team in both hits and RBI.

Kyle Dupic, So., P – A Second Team All-Iowa Conference selection as a relief pitcher last season, Dupic made 15 appearances, posting a 4-2 record with a 5.14 ERA, two saves, and 27 strikeouts.

Quote from head coach Steve Eddie

"We gained a lot of experience last season, and we look to be a little more competitive this year. The league keeps getting better. I would expect the top of the league to be as good as ever. It is going to be a challenge to make it into the top half of the conference standings."

Central College Dutch
2008 Record: 22-21 overall, 10-13 IIAC (6th)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 4/4
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 3/2

Players to Watch

Adam Squires, Jr., P – Squires, an honorable mention All-Iowa Conference selection last season, appeared in 17 games last season, posting a 1-5 record with a 3.90 ERA and 42 strikeouts in 55 1/3 innings.

Caleb Rangel, So., OF/P – Rangel, another honorable mention All-Conference performer, led the team with a .355 batting average with one home run and 27 RBI. He knocked out a team-high 50 hits. Rangel also appeared in three games on the mound, posting a 1-0 record with a 3.18 ERA and five strikeouts in 5 2/3 innings.

Derek Knutson, Sr., 1B/OF – Central's third honorable mention All-Conference performer, Knutson started all 43 games last season hitting .298 with 45 hits, 30 runs scored and 39 RBI. Knutson finished second on the team in RBI.

DJ Glasgow, So., P – Glasgow posted a 6-1 record and a 4.53 ERA in 12 appearances last season, striking out 33 and walking only 16 in 49 2/3 innings. He finished one off the team lead for wins.

Quote from head coach Adam Stevens

"We are going to have some young players in key positions early in the season. We feel we do have the talent and attitude to put together a solid team as the conference season begins later in the spring. Our guys have shown a great attitude and work ethic and we are excited to see what this team can do."

Coe College Kohawks

2008 Record: 22-20 overall, 13-10 IIAC (3rd)

Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 6/3

Pitchers Returning/Lost: 3/1

Players to Watch

Tyler McAllister, Sr., SS – McAllister was a First Team All-Conference and Second Team All-Region selection last season. He started all 42 games last season, hitting .351 with team-high 54 hits and 36 RBI. McAllister also stole a league-high 17 bases and ranked among the league leaders in hits (t-5th), RBI (t-4th), home runs (t-3rd; 5), slugging percentage (8th; .352); total bases (3rd; 82);

Ryan Velvick, So., OF – Velvick was a First Team All-Conference selection at designated hitter in 2008 after hitting .342 with five home runs and 21 RBI. In 36 games, he collected 40 hits with six doubles and a .538 slugging percentage. Velvick ranked tied for third in home runs and sixth in slugging percentage.

Alec Lewis, Jr., RHP – Lewis, a Second Team All-Conference selection last season, appeared in team-high 15 games last season on the mound, posting a 6-3 record with a 4.30 ERA, 59 strikeouts, and two saves in 69 innings. Lewis ranked fourth in the league in strikeouts and fifth in innings pitched.

Ryan Nicholson, Sr., RHP – Nicholson, a Second Team All-Conference selection in 2006, appeared in 16 games, posting a 6-5 record with a 4.08 ERA and 61 strikeouts in a league-high 79 1/3 innings. Nicholson ranked third in the league in strikeouts.

Quote from head coach Steve Cook

"We are looking forward to another competitive season in the Iowa Conference. Our team will have a nice mix of veterans and new players. We look to come together as the schedule progresses and work towards playing our best baseball at the end of the season."

Cornell College Rams

2008 Record: 13-16 overall, 7-13 IIAC (8th)

Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 3/6

Pitchers Returning/Lost: 4/5

Players to Watch

Casey Korn, Sr., P/SS – Korn, a First Team All-IIAC selection as a utility player in 2007, played in 23 games a year ago, hitting .266 with 18 runs scored and 18 RBI. On the mound, he posted team-highs in appearances (10), strikeouts (30), and innings pitched (54.0), with a 2-5 record and a 4.33 ERA.

Michael Tierney, Sr., CF – A Second Team All-IIAC outfielder last season, Tierney hit .282 with nine RBI and 16 runs scored in 24 games. He also posted a .982 fielding percentage, committing only one error in 57 chances.

Matt Shimanovsky, Jr., 2B/SS – Shimanovsky played in 25 games last season, hitting .344 with 11 RBI, 10 runs scored and a team-high .459 slugging percentage. He ranked second on the team in batting average.

Andy Krekel, Jr., C – Krekel started 19 of the 20 games he appeared in last season, hitting .270 with 10 RBI.

Quote from head coach Frank Fishler

"We are excited for the 2009 season. The team has a strong work ethic and good leadership from our upperclassmen. The team has been focused on the small details that win baseball games. The players have worked hard and expect to climb up in the Iowa Conference standings."

University of Dubuque Spartans
2008 Record: 14-25 overall, 7-16 IIAC (9th)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 2/7
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 1/4

Players to Watch

Alex Larson, Jr., OF – Larson played in 36 games, hitting .333 with five doubles, 16 RBI and 13 runs scored.

Chris Duran, DH – Duran started all 39 games for the Spartans last season, hitting .331 with five doubles, 18 RBI, and 17 runs scored.

Jordan Skaar, P – Skaar appeared in 10 games last season, posting a 1.04 ERA with six strikeouts in 8 2/3 innings.

Quote from head coach Shane Schellsmidt

"I am excited about our new recruiting class. But, after the loss of our three All-Region players, we will be inexperienced. I feel if we can show consistency on defense and on the mound, we'll be in every game."

Loras College Duhawks
2008 Record: 23-23 overall, 11-12 IIAC (5th)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 7/3
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 4/5

Players to Watch

Nick Olberding, Sr., SS – A Second Team All-IIAC selection last season, Olberding started all 46 games for the Duhawks, hitting .331 with 57 hits, 31 runs scored, 30 RBI, and 15 doubles. He also led the team with a .471 slugging percentage. Last year, Olberding led the league in doubles and assists (124) and ranked among the league leaders in hits (2nd) and total bases (4th; 81) .

Adam Gross, Sr., OF – Gross, a First Team All-Conference selection in 2007, hit .296 with 50 hits, 33 runs scored, 26 RBI, and a team-high 15 stolen bases. His stolen base total also ranked fourth among all IIAC players.

Clark Egdorf, Sr., OF – Egdorf, a Second Team All-IIAC selection last season, appeared in 34 games last season, hitting .300 with 30 hits, 11 runs scored, and 13 RBI.

Kevin Moriarity, So., P – An honorable mention All-Iowa Conference selection last season, Moriarity appeared in 12 games, posting a 6-5 record with a 4.85 ERA and 56 strikeouts in 68 2/3 innings. He ranked sixth leaguewide in innings pitched and seventh in strikeouts.

Quote from head coach Carl Tebon

"This conference is so competitive from top to bottom. For us to stay in the upper half this year we will have to pitch very well and play very good defense."

Luther College Norse
2008 Record: 17-18 overall, 11-10 IIAC (4th)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 6/2
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 9/1

Players to Watch

Adam Kohls, Sr., RHP – Kohls, a two-time First Team All-Conference and two-time All-Central Region selection, appeared in 11 games last season, posting a 5-2 record with a 2.86 ERA with 57 strikeouts in 63 innings. He ranked third in the IIAC in opposing batting average (.229), fifth in strikeouts, sixth in ERA, and tenth in innings pitched.

Jake Waddle, Sr., C – Waddle, a First Team All-Conference and Second Team All-Central Region selection last season, was the team's leading hitter in 2008. He hit .421 with 51 hits, 31 runs scored, 14 doubles, four triples, and 28 RBI while slugging .653. Waddle led the league in batting average and on base percentage (.497), ranked third in slugging percentage and doubles, and seventh in hits.

Nathan Neis, Sr., 2B – Neis returns to the squad after missing last year to complete academic requirements related to his major. In 2007, he batted .315 with 16 RBI.

Ben Schott, Jr., 1B – Schott started all 35 games last season, hitting .353 with 41 hits and 24 RBI. He also posted a .982 fielding percentage, making only five errors in 277 chances.

Quote from head coach Brian Gillogly

"With an experienced staff the strength of our team will be pitching. Replacing a couple positions will be the key to again being strong on the defensive side of the ball. Showing the ability to produce runs along with being efficient on the base paths will allow us to be very competitive in the conference race."

Simpson College Storm
2008 Record: 25-16 overall, 14-9 IIAC (2nd)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 5/4
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 6/3

Players to Watch

Chris Jones, Sr., LF – A First Team All-IIAC selection last season, Jones appeared in 37 games, posting a .321 batting average and team-highs with four home runs and 35 RBI. He ranked sixth in the IIAC in RBI.

Cory Dawson, Sr., DH/1B – Dawson, a Second Team All-Iowa Conference utility player last season, was Simpson's leading hitter a year ago. In 37 games, he hit .380 with 49 hits, 11 doubles, and 24 RBI. Dawson scored 33 runs and had a .535 slugging percentage. He ranked fifth in the league in batting average, sixth in on base percentage (.457), and seventh in slugging percentage.

Jesse Reis, Sr., 2B – Reis, an honorable mention All-IIAC selection last year, appeared in 37 games, hitting .339 with 37 hits, 21 runs scored, and nine doubles. He also drove in 31 and posted a .978 fielding percentage (4 errors in 181 chances). Reis ranked second in the league on base percentage (.482)

Jared Sass, Jr., RHP – Sass, a Second Team All-Conference selection, appeared in 13 games for the Storm, posting a 7-1 record with a 3.15 ERA, 41 strikeouts, and one save in 65 2/3 innings. He ranked among the league leaders in wins (first-tie), opposing batting average (fifth, .234), ERA (seventh), and innings pitched (eighth).

Quote from head coach Ben Blake

"We will return a strong group of seniors, and several all-conference selections. Cory Dawson, Chris Jones, Jesse Reis and Curt Bjork will anchor us defensively and hopefully provide a little punch in our line up. Jared Sass has been our #1 since he stepped on campus, and we need him help lead a fairly young and inexperienced staff. Overall, we should field a strong group, and this year, like every year, pitching will be the key to this teams success."

Wartburg College Knights
2008 Record: 27-15 overall, 17-3 IIAC (t-1st)
Starting Position Players Returning/Lost: 7/2
Pitchers Returning/Lost: 4/2

Players to Watch

Billy Schmitt, Jr., RHP – Schmitt, a First Team All-Iowa Conference selection last season, made 11 starts, posting a 6-1 record with a 3.90 ERA and a team-high 56 strikeouts in 64 2/3 innings. Opponents hit only .203 against him. Schmitt ranked second in the league in opponent's batting average, seventh in strikeouts, ninth in innings pitched, 10th in ERA, and tied for the league's second-highest win total.

Jerrold Martijn, Sr., OF/LHP – Martijn, the league's 2008 Position Player of the Year, led the Knights with a .390 average, 55 hits, 40 runs scored, six home runs, and a .652 slugging percentage. He also had 13 doubles, drove in 26, and stole seven bases. On the mound, Martijn posted a 4-4 record with a 3.58 ERA, 42 strikeouts and two saves in 50 1/3 innings. At the plate, Martijn led the league in total bases (92), tied for the lead in runs scored, ranked second in home runs, fourth in batting average, hits, and slugging percentage, fifth in on base percentage (.463). He also ranked among the league's pitching leaders, ranking eighth in ERA and opposing batting average (.245).

Kyle Jones, Sr., OF – A Second Team All-Conference selection, Jones played in 39 games hitting .336 with 40 hits, 26 runs scored, four home runs, and a league-leading 15 doubles. His .563 slugging percentage ranked fifth in the IIAC and his .451 on base percentage ranked ninth.

Danny Rose, Jr., SS/RHP – Another Second Team All-Conference selection, Rose hit .242 in 33 games with 31 hits and 7 doubles.

A.J. Lewis, Sr., C – Lewis, who received Second Team All-IIAC honors in 2008, was the team's second leading hitter among starters with .363 average, five doubles, two home runs and 19 RBI. A two-year starter, he started 33 of the 34 games he appeared in behind the plate. His batting average ranked ninth in the IIAC.

Quote from head coach Joel Holst

"We have 13 seniors and a strong group of returning starters. We are hopeful that this experience will help put a championship team on the field this season."