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## 2008 IOWA CONFERENCE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

**CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Wartburg College**, which has four titles and five runner-up finishes in the past ten seasons, is the coaches' pick to win the 2008 IIAC football title. The Knights received five of nine first-place votes, totaling 69 points and edging three-time defending IIAC champion **Central College** by a single marker.

Central, an NCAA Division III quarterfinalist in 2007, received the other four first-place votes, along with five second-place votes for a total of 68 points. **Coe College** is third in the preseason poll with 53 points followed by the **University of Dubuque** with 51 points and **Simpson College** with 47 points. The complete 2008 IIAC football Coaches' Poll follows:

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2007 Record
1	Wartburg (5)	69	8-2, 7-1 IIAC
2	Central (4)	68	12-1, 8-0 IIAC
3	Coe	53	7-3, 5-3 IIAC
4	Dubuque	51	7-3, 5-3 IIAC
5	Simpson	47	4-6, 3-6 IIAC
6	Loras	32	2-8, 1-7 IIAC
7	Luther	31	5-5, 4-4 IIAC
8	Buena Vista	29	5-5, 3-5 IIAC
9	Cornell	16	2-8, 0-8 IIAC

**Preseason All-Americans:** Six Iowa Conference football players were named to preseason All-America Teams. Coe senior defensive back/kick returner **Tom Breitbach** was named to the Second Team by D3football.com, while he and teammate **Jordan Wilkins**, a senior defensive lineman, were named to the Second Team by *Lindy's*. Dubuque defensive end **Rohan Malcom** and defensive tackle **Travis Strowbridge** were named to the First Team Defense by Consensus Draft Services (CDS), while senior offensive tackle **Steven Coleman** was named to the Second Team Offense. Wilkins and Simpson senior defensive tackle **Tim Stover** were named to the Second Team Defense by CDS.

**Preseason National Polls:** Defending Conference Champion Central and runner-up Wartburg are included in multiple preseason national polls. Central is 9th on D3football.com, 14th in *USA Today Sports Weekly*, 15th in *Lindy's* poll, and 23rd in *Street & Smith's Sporting News Football Annual*. Wartburg is 13th in *Lindy's* poll, 17th in *USA Today Sports Weekly*, 19th in *Street and Smith's Sporting News Football Annual*, and 23rd on D3football.com.

**New Coaches:** Iowa high school coaching hall of famer **Steve Staker** is the new head coach at Coe. Staker, who spent the last four years as defensive coordinator after 35 years at the prep level, takes over for Erik Raeburn, who resigned to become head coach at Wabash. **Mike Durnin** is the new head coach at Luther. Durnin, who spent seven years as an assistant at Wisconsin-La Crosse, takes over for Paul Hefty. **Jim Glogowski** takes over for Jay Niemann at Simpson. Glogowski comes to Indianola from the University of South Dakota, where he was the defensive coordinator. At Wartburg, **Rick Willis** returns to the sidelines after a two-year hiatus. He replaces Eric Koehler, who resigned in late July to become offensive coordinator at Division II power Grand Valley State (Mich.).

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

**Buena Vista** returns 12 starters and 28 letterwinners from last season's 5-5 team that tied for sixth in the Conference with a 3-5 record. The Beavers return seven on the defensive side of the ball led by **Michael Sly** at strong safety. Sly, a versatile all-around player who received Second Team All-Conference honors each of the past two seasons at defensive back, finished fourth on the team with 65 tackles, including 11 for loss. He also had one interception and three pass break-ups. Sly also doubles as the BVU's punter, posting a 33.0 yards average in 2007. Junior linebacker **Ben Hansen** ranked second on the team with 86 tackles, including 5.5 for loss. Senior cornerback **Rahn Franklin Jr.** finished fifth on the team in tackles with 38 and led the Beavers with three interceptions. Franklin also returned kicks, averaging 20.9 yards per return. Leading the way on the defensive line is defensive tackle **Austin Dickinson** who tallied 33 tackles (5.5 for loss) and a sack.

The offense returns five starters, including the running back tandem of senior **Alex Moss** and sophomore **Cory Donscheski**. Donscheski ranked seventh in the IIAC with 628 rushing yards on 157 carries and four touchdowns and was second on the team in receptions with 32 for 246 yards. Moss added 532 yards on 141 carries and another four touchdowns. Moss also caught 24 passes for 203 yards. Senior wide receiver **Trent Svendsen** matched Moss' 24 receptions for 361 yards and three touchdowns. Svendsen also ranked fifth in the league in punt returns, averaging 8.6 yards per return. Senior center **Trevor Ulrich** anchors a line that finished third in the league in passing offense.

Buena Vista head coach **Jay Anderson** says, "We'll work to see improvement each week of the season."

**Central** returns 10 starters and 37 letterwinners from last season's 12-1 team that finished first in the Conference with an 8-0 record. The Dutch captured their Conference-record 29th IIAC title last year and made its NCAA record-tying 19th playoff appearance, advancing to the quarterfinal round before falling to Bethel (Minn.), 27-13. Central must replace six offensive starters and nine defensive starters from last year's team, including a pair of Iowa Conference MVPs (RB Vance Schuring, 2005-06; QB Tim Connell, 2007). Aiding in this transition is the fact that the Dutch return the bulk of their offensive line, including senior guard **Spenser Remick** and sophomore tackle **Lee Schroeder**. Remick was a 2007 First Team All-Conference selection, while Schroeder started much of his freshman season. Senior S-back **Nate Craft** caught 19 passes for 231 yards and three touchdowns while also rushing for 41 yards and a score on 23 carries. Junior tight end **Jordan Leuschen** grabbed 18 passes for 255 yards and five touchdowns.

The defense must be rebuilt. Cornerback **Cody Baethke** enters his junior year as a potential standout. Baethke made 25 tackles and was second on the team with nine pass breakups. Senior defensive lineman **J.J. Owens** made 35 stops last season, including three for loss with a sack and a fumble recovery. Senior linebacker **Ryan Thompson** made 17 tackles in four games last season before suffering a season-ending injury.

The kicking game is in excellent shape as the Dutch return First Team All-Conference punter **Kurtis Brondyke** and kicker **Jason Viggers**, both sophomores. Brondyke averaged 37.9 yards per punt last season and placed a school-record 25 punts inside the 20-yard line. Viggers led the team in scoring, connecting on 13 of 15 field goals and 38 of 41 PATs.

Central head coach **Jeff McMartin** says, "We're excited about the season. We have a lot of new faces and our challenge right now is bringing them together and getting them working as a team. But we've got a lot of team guys and I'm confident that will happen. The Iowa Conference will be a battle every week. The league has some outstanding coaches and great players. We have to be ready to go every Saturday."

**Coe** returns 15 starters and 34 letterwinners from last season's 7-3 team that finished in a tie for third in the Conference with a 5-3 record. The Coe defense returns four All-Conference picks from last year. Up front, senior defensive end **Jordan Wilkens**, a first team selection, posted 59 tackles with 6.5 sacks and a league-high 23.0 tackles for loss. Senior defensive tackle **Jordan Pinckney**, a second team selection, made 38 tackles with four sacks and 10 tackles for loss. Junior linebacker **Tate Harrison**, a Second Team selection, ranked fifth in the Conference in tackles with a 10.8 per game average. He also ranked in the top ten of the IIAC in sacks (5.0) and tackles for loss (15.0). Senior free safety **Kyle Brockmeyer** ranked fifth on the team with 61 tackles and tied for the team lead with six interceptions. Senior cornerback/return specialist **Tom Breitbach**, a first team selection at both positions last season, was tied for third on the team with 62 stops, including 7.0 for a loss. He also broke up 13 passes, intercepting a pair.

Breitbach will also play a significant role in the Kohawk offense and special teams this season. He caught 31 passes for 442 yards and three touchdowns. He led the team with 1174 all-purpose yards after averaging 15.6 yards per punt return with two touchdowns and 24.3 yards per kickoff return. Wide receiver **Nick Ratchford** was Coe's top receiver a year ago with 41 catches for 423 yards and five touchdowns. Junior running back **Sam Hammes** also returns after ranking second on the team with 316 yards and three touchdowns. Hammes also ranked second on the team with 34 receptions for 389 yards and two touchdowns. Senior **Shaun Lehmann** returns to anchor the offensive line.

Coe head coach **Steve Staker** says, "We have a strong nucleus coming back on the defensive side of the ball led by two preseason All-Americans, giving us a lot of optimism about making a run at the title. Offensively we have eight starters back, which is good, however, the key component will be the quarterback spot. I feel we have the guy that can do the job. He just hasn't taken many snaps under fire. We are looking forward to a fun and exciting season."

**Cornell** returns 13 starters and 30 letterwinners from last season's 2-8 team that finished ninth in the Conference with an 0-8 record. Senior running back **Travion Hardman**, an Honorable Mention All-Conference selection in 2007, led the team in rushing (705), carries (135), touchdowns (7) and yards per rush (5.2). He enters the season exactly 1,000 yards shy of Cornell's all-time rushing mark. Sophomore quarterback Dallas Bush started the final four games of last season, going 48-of-107 for 533 yards, two touchdowns and eight interceptions. Junior tight end **Alex Macey** will be one of Bush's main targets. In 2007, Macey hauled in 15 passes for 148 yards and three touchdowns. The offensive line has undergone an overhaul, but will benefit from the leadership provided by senior offensive tackle **Matt Pilger**, who started nine games last season.

A trio of juniors will lead Cornell's defense. Free safety **Don Bladt** is the Rams' top returning tackler with 86 stops. He also had two interceptions, 5.5 tackles for loss, two fumble recoveries, and a team-high eight pass breakups. Defensive tackle **Zach Zasada** posted 41 tackles last season, including team-highs in sacks (5.5) and tackles for loss (10.0). Linebacker **Brian King**, who had 45 tackles in 2007, has the unenviable task of trying to fill the shoes of All-American Chris Gustafson. Cornell returns nine of its top ten tacklers from last season.

Cornell head coach **Matt Dillon** says, "The talent level in our program has greatly improved in my two years here. We feel like we have legitimate Iowa Conference talent in the program to give us a chance to compete. From a sheer numbers standpoint we still fall below the rest of the league but we are excited about the guys we'll be putting on the field. Look for a continued improvement from this Rams team."

**Dubuque** returns 10 starters and 32 letterwinners from last season's 7-3 team that finished tied for third in the Conference with a 5-3 record, the school's second consecutive top-division finish. With serious competition in the offensive backfield due to the graduation of All-America quarterback Jermar Jackson, the Spartans will benefit from the presence of senior offensive linemen **Dustin Vertin** and **Steven Coleman**. Vertin and Coleman, a Second Team All-Conference selection, anchor a line that helped Dubuque lead the league in rushing offense, scoring offense, and total offense. Senior tight end **Adam Burken**, an Honorable Mention All-IIAC honoree last season, should add to that protection. Burken caught 20 passes for 253 yards and a touchdown in nine games last season. Senior wide receiver **Ed McIntosh**, a Second Team All-Conference selection in 2006, also returns after ranking fourth on the team with 21 catches for 417 yards and a touchdown. Junior receiver Brennan **Relaford** added 12 catches for 205 yards and a team-high four receiving touchdowns.

The strength of the Spartan defense should be up front as three experienced defensive linemen return. Senior **Rohan Malcom** ranked fifth on the team with 60 tackles, but posted team-highs with 17 tackles for loss and 11.5 sacks. Junior **Karl Grant** made 23 tackles, including 5.0 for loss and 1.5 sacks. Senior **Collins Eboh** played in only four games last season, but made 10 tackles, including a sack. Senior strong safety **Orlando Walton** made 33 stops and posted team-highs with four interceptions and 12 pass break-ups. Walton, an Honorable Mention All-Conference selection, also averaged 20.8 yards per kickoff return last season.

Dubuque head coach **Vince Brautigam** says, "2008 will see plenty of competition for starting roles after the loss of a big senior class."

**Loras** returns 15 starters and 26 letterwinners from last season's 2-8 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 1-7 record. Senior running back **Alex McGrew**, a Second Team All-Conference selection, returns to lead the Duhawk offensive effort. McGrew ranked fourth in the IIAC, averaging 83.0 yards per game with seven touchdowns. He also ranked second in the league in all-purpose yards with a 180.1 yard per game average. McGrew also caught 21 passes for 201 yards and averaged 22.3 yards per kickoff return and 7.2 yards per punt return. Senior wide receiver **Ben McMahon** ranked fourth on the team with 19 receptions for 234 yards. Senior center **Jon Pereiro** will anchor the offensive line.

Senior linebacker **Reed Peterson** led the team last season with 73 tackles. Junior defensive lineman **Kenny Kikilas** ranked sixth on the team with 45 tackles, including 10.5 for loss and 1.5 sacks. Junior cornerback **Tommy Jahnke**, a three-year starter in the secondary, added 35 stops with an interception and a team-high nine pass breakups.

Loras head coach **Steve Osterberger** says, "This is always a great conference. First and foremost, we need to win those close games in the league to increase our win total. In terms of the 2008 season, everyone within our program is ready to make this season a success. This team has a great core of experienced players and some new faces who bring tremendous talent to the roster. We will be relying on our four captains, both in terms of leadership in the locker room and performance on the field."

**Luther** returns 14 starters and 29 letterwinners from last season's 5-5 team that finished fifth in the Conference with a 4-4 record. Only three starters return on offense from last year. Senior offensive tackle **Spencer Allen**, a Second Team All-Conference selection in 2007, will anchor the rebuilt offensive line. Senior wide receiver **Jesse Kent** ranked sixth in the IIAC with a team-high 38 receptions for 408 yards and three touchdowns. Senior running back **Adam Lamos** is Luther's top returning rusher. He carried the ball 70 times for 315 and three touchdowns.

Senior defensive end **Cody Webb** returns to lead the Norse defensive line. A year ago, he tallied 53 tackles, including a team-best 11 for loss. Senior nose guard **Brandon Rickertson**, who has played in 10 games over the past two seasons with 28 tackles, will look to provide some inside pressure. Junior strong safety **Trevor Theobald** ranked fifth on the team with 47 tackles with 8.0 for a loss. He also intercepted one pass and broke up five passes.

Luther head coach **Mike Durnin** says, "I am excited and honored to be the Head Football Coach at Luther College and in the IIAC and I am looking forward to the challenge of leading the Norse Football Program in one of the top Division III leagues around the nation. The IIAC has always been very competitive and this year should prove no differently. Central and Wartburg have outstanding traditions, but there are a number of other teams that are primed and ready for their opportunities. We, at Luther, have a number of very good football players who I believe are ready to take the next step.

**Simpson** returns 18 starters and 45 letterwinners from last season's 4-6 team that tied for sixth in the Conference with a 3-5 record. Senior running back **Adam Reutzel** earned First Team All-Conference honors last season, ranking third in the Iowa Conference in rushing with 946 yards and five touchdowns. When combined with his 344 receiving yards on 31 catches, Reutzel also ranked third in the league in all-purpose yards. Senior **Travis Dietz** and junior **Tyson Unkrich** will battle it out for the starting quarterback job during training camp. Dietz started five times in 10 varsity appearances last season. He was 88-for-166 for 1,116 yards and seven touchdown passes. Dietz also rushed 51 times for 217 yards and three touchdowns. Unkrich started the other five varsity games while playing eight times. Unkrich was 84-for-170 for 742 yards and three touchdowns. Junior **Brody Tubaugh** is a returning starter at wide receiver. Tubaugh was third on the team in receiving as he made 30 catches for 191 yards with one touchdown.

Eight starters return on defense for the Storm. Up front, senior defensive tackle **Luke Stover** is one of three starters back. Stover, a Second Team All-Conference selection, finished third on the team in tackles with 91, including 11.0 for loss. He was second on the team in sacks with 3.5. Senior defensive end **Ben Pruss** made 38 tackles in 10 varsity starts last season and was fourth on the team in tackles for a loss with 5.5. He also broke up four passes and made 2.5 sacks. Senior inside linebacker **Tim Stover**, another Second Team All-Conference selection, finished 20th in Division III in total tackles per game (12.3) after leading the Storm in tackles with 123. He tied for second on the team with his brother Luke in tackles for a loss (11) and was third on the team in sacks with three.

Simpson head coach **Jim Glogowski** says, "Spring practice gave us an excellent opportunity to get to know our kids. I really think that it will pay dividends this fall. I really like the attitude and effort our guys showed throughout the transition and look forward to seeing them develop and come together as a team."

**Wartburg** returns 17 starters and 33 letterwinners from last season's 8-2 team that finished second in the Conference with a 7-1 record. In the offensive backfield, junior quarterback **Nick Yordi** returns after a solid 2007 where he tied the single-season record for pass completions (182) and set a single-game record for completions with 30 against Augsburg. Yordi threw for 2,184 yards and 18 touchdowns, averaging just under 242.7 passing yards per game. Senior tight end **Ryan Hoerner** led the Knights' receiving corps last season in terms of yardage with 523 yards on 27 catches, including four touchdowns. Senior wide receiver **Justin Vetter** played in only seven games due to an injury, but still hauled in 18 passes for 209 yards. He averaged 29.9 yards per game and 11.6 yards per reception. Senior offensive lineman **Scott Crawford** is one of the top returners for a Wartburg squad that led the IAC in passing offense last season.

The Knights' had seven All-Conference performers on the defense that led the IAC in total defense, scoring defense, pass defense, rush defense, and red zone defense. Five of those players return led by First Teamers **Nico Botembe** and **Kyle Goodchild**. Botembe, a senior defensive lineman, made 32 tackles, including 11.0 for loss and seven sacks. Senior linebackers Goodchild and **Ryan Gerardy** lead a deep, experienced linebacking corps. Goodchild tied for second on the team with 67 tackles and added seven tackles for loss and 3.5 sacks. Gerardy made 46 stops, including 5.5 for a loss. Senior defensive back Jason Lansing, a two-time Second Team All-Conference selection led the Knights with 87 tackles and tied for the team lead in interceptions with four.

The Knights also return senior placekicker **Spencer Herzberg** and senior punter **Stevan Kingery**. Kingery, a Second Team All-Conference selection, averaged 39.5 yards per punt last season. Herzberg, an honorable mention selection, hit on seven of 14 field goals and was 32-of-36 on PATs.

Wartburg head coach **Rick Willis** says, "We are excited about our football team. There are a number of proven players returning, but several positions remain uncertain as the season starts. We will rely on a talented and experienced group of seniors to lead the way."

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