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2008-09 IOWA CONFERENCE MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Buena Vista University, which won its ninth Iowa Conference title overall and its sixth title since 1996-97, is the coaches' pick to capture the 2008-09 IIAC men's basketball championship. The Beavers received eight of nine first-place votes (coaches cannot vote for their own teams), totaling the maximum 72 points in the IIAC Men's Basketball Coaches' Poll.

Loras College picked up the remaining first-place vote and is second in the poll with 64 points. The Duhawks finished one game back in a bid to repeat after winning their first Iowa Conference title since 1950-51 in 2006-07. Cornell College and Wartburg College tied for the third spot with 51 points each, followed by University of Dubuque (41 points). The complete 2008-09 IIAC Men's Basketball Coaches' Poll follows.

| Rank | School (1st place votes) | Points | 2007-08 Record |
|------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| 1 | Buena Vista (8) | 72 | (23-7, 14-2 IIAC) |
| 2 | Loras (1) | 64 | (22-7, 13-3 IIAC) |
| 3 | Cornell | 51 | (9-17, 7-9 IIAC) |
| | Wartburg | 51 | (9-16, 6-10 IIAC) |
| 5 | Dubuque | 41 | (14-12, 8-8 IIAC) |
| 6 | Coe | 35 | (16-11, 10-6 IIAC) |
| 7 | Central | 31 | (14-10, 7-9 IIAC) |
| 8 | Simpson | 29 | (7-18, 4-12 IIAC) |
| 9 | Luther | 22 | (7-18, 3-13 IIAC) |

Preseason Polls: Buena Vista is ranked eighth in the D3hoops.com preseason poll and 12th in the DIII News Top 25 Poll. Loras is among those receiving votes in the D3hoops.com preseason poll.

Opening Weekend: The 2008-09 Iowa Conference men's basketball season begins Saturday, November 15, as four teams take to the hardwood. Buena Vista travels to Menomonie, Wis., to face UW-Stout, Central is at Faith Baptist, Simpson hosts Augustana (Ill.) and Dubuque hosts Knox. The 18-date Iowa Conference schedule begins Wednesday, December 3, with a full slate of four league games.

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

Buena Vista return four starters and six letterwinners from last season's 23-7 team that finished won the Iowa Conference title for the fifth time in nine years with a 14-2 league record. The Beavers, who advanced to the sectional semifinal round of the NCAA Championship where they fell 85-77 in overtime to eventual national champion Washington (Mo.), will be led in the backcourt by senior guards **Andre Wagner** and **Rahn Franklin**. Wagner, the team's leading scorer and a First Team All-Conference selection, averaged 14.7 points, 2.1 rebounds, 1.9 steals, and 1.3 assists per game, ranking seventh in the Conference in scoring, 1st in steals, 13th in field goal percentage (45.6 percent) and free throw percentage (69.8 percent), 12th in 3-point field goal percentage (39.4 percent) and 3rd in 3-point field goals (74). Franklin averaged 6.6 points, 3.3 rebounds, 3.3 assists, and 1.0 steals per game, ranking sixth in the IIAC in assists and 15th in steals. Up front, Buena Vista will look to senior center **Brian Fogleman** to lead. Fogleman, a Second Team All-Conference selection last season, averaged 9.4 points, 5.9 rebounds, and 1.4 assists per game, ranking among the league leaders in scoring (21st), rebounding (7th), and field goal percentage (4th, 53.6 percent).

Buena Vista head coach **Brian Van Haaften** says, "The league will be interesting this year, as many very good seniors graduated. The league should be balanced and exciting again this year."

Central returns two starters and 11 letterwinners from last season's 14-10 team that finished tied for fifth in the Conference with a 7-9 record. The Dutch will be led in the back court by guards **Miguel Ley** and **Justin Madsen**. Ley, a Second Team All-IIAC selection last year, averaged 15.6 points, 3.8 rebounds, 2.3 assists, and 1.2 steals. He ranked sixth in the league in scoring, fifth in 3-point field-goal percentage (43.8 percent), seventh in free-throw percentage (77.3 percent) and steals, 10th in assists, and 15th in field-goal percentage (45.1 percent). Madsen averaged 4.7 points and 1.7 rebounds in 24 games last season. Post players **Zach Cooper** and **Preston Davidson** will anchor the Central frontline. Cooper started 22 of 24 games last season, averaging 3.4 points, 4.5 rebounds, and 1.3 blocked shots. He ranked second in the league in blocked shots and 17th in rebounding. Davidson played in all 24 games last season, averaging 4.7 points and 3.1 rebounds. He ranked 10th in the league in blocked shots with a 0.58 per game average.

Central head coach **Mike Boschee** says, "This should be another interesting year in the Iowa Conference. The [teams in the league are] well-coached and a lot of returning talent will make things difficult. We have quite a few holes to fill in our lineup but feel we should be okay. I like what we have returning and we have added a few newcomers to the mix who should make us competitive."

Coe returns one starter and eight letterwinners from last season's 16-11 team that finished third in the Conference with a 10-6 record. After losing their top four scorers and top five rebounders from a year ago, the Kohawks will face an uphill battle this season if they hope to maintain their place in the Iowa Conference standings. Senior forward **Christian Parent** is Coe's top returning scorer averaging 6.8 points per game. He ranked sixth in the IIAC in 3-point field goal percentage (43.5 percent). Senior point guard **Kevin Dux** added 4.8 points, 1.2 assists, and 1.1 steals per game, ranking 11th in the league in steals. Sophomore guard **Alex Tatman** averaged 6.5 points and 2.5 rebounds in 21 games last season.

Coe head coach **Pat Juckem** says, "Our practices have been very competitive as new and returning players are finding their roles. We have some holes to fill, but are excited about the progress being made each day. The league should be extremely competitive from top to bottom with many excellent players returning."

Cornell returns all five starters and 13 letterwinners from last season's 9-17 team that finished tied for fifth in the Conference with a 7-9 record. Senior shooting guard **Griffin LaDew**, a two-time All-Iowa Conference selection, averaged 16.7 points, 3.3 rebounds, 1.9 assists, and 1.7 steals while leading the team in scoring and steals. LaDew led the IIAC in free throw percentage (94.8 percent; school record) and 3-point field goals made (79), and ranked second in steals, third in scoring, fourth in 3-point field goal percentage (43.9 percent), eighth in field goal percentage (50.2 percent), and 15th in assists. With 1,158 career points, he enters the season ranked ninth on the school's scoring list and is on pace to break Jeff Fleming's all-time scoring mark of 1,373 points. Senior point guard **Michael Tierney**, a Second Team All-IIAC honoree last year, averaged 12.8 points, 3.4 assists, 3.0 rebounds, and 1.5 steals in 21 games. He ranked ninth in the Conference in scoring, second in free throw percentage (91.0 percent), fourth in steals and assist-to-turnover ratio (+1.20), fifth in assists, and 14th in field goal percentage (45.4 percent). Junior forward **Matt Lewis** also returns after missing last season due to an injury. During the 2006-07 season, Lewis started 23 games averaging 6.7 points, 3.4 rebounds, 1.6 assists, and 0.7 steals.

Cornell head coach **Mike DeGeorge** says, "We are very excited about the challenge this year brings. We believe we have the depth and experience to compete for the conference championship, if we can stay healthy, establish a winning formula, and maintain our approach throughout the season."

Dubuque returns four starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 14-12 team that finished fourth in the Conference with an 8-8 record. Sophomore point guard **Taylor Blum** was the Spartans' second-leading scorer last season, averaging 13.7 points per game. He was also third on the team in assists with a 2.5 assist per game average. Junior off-guard **Austin Gorsh** ranked third on the team in scoring, averaging 6.5 points per game. He also averaged 1.0 assist and 0.6 steals per game. Senior forward **Mike Peek** averaged 5.8 points, 4.3 rebounds and 1.0 assists in 26 games last season.

Dubuque head coach **Robbie Sieverding** says, "We like the balance and work ethic of our team so far in practice. We have several [returning players] who got significant minutes last season and we need those kids to step up and become leaders on this team. We look forward to another exciting year of basketball in the Iowa Conference."

Loras returns three starters and seven letterwinners from last season's 22-7 team that finished second in the Conference with 13-3 record, but won the Iowa Conference Tournament and advanced to the second round of the NCAA Championship. The Duhawks, who must fill the void left by the graduation of two-time IIAC Most Valuable Player **Kyle White**, will rely on a trio of experienced seniors to provide stability and leadership. Off-guard **Ricky Kolze** was Loras' second-leading scorer last season, averaging 13.2 points per game. He also chipped in with 3.7 rebounds per game and ranked among the league leaders in scoring (8th), field goal percentage (9th, 48.4 percent), and 3-point field goal percentage (3rd, 44.3 percent). Point guard **Brian Centella** ranked third on the team in scoring with 12.0 points per game. Centella also pulled down 3.7 rebounds per game and led the team with 3.0 assists per game. He ranked among the league leaders in scoring (10th), assists (7th), and free throw percentage (3rd, 84.5 percent). Small forward **Jake Oeth** averaged 8.4 points per game and ranked second on the team in rebounds (5.3/game) and assists (2.0/game). Oeth landed among the league leaders in scoring (25th), rebounding (14th), field goal percentage (10th, 48.1 percent) and assists (14th). Kolze and Centella were Second Team All-Conference selections last season.

Loras head coach **Greg Gorton** says, "The Loras men's basketball team returns five senior guards. We will have a great deal of experience in the backcourt and some young talent in the frontcourt."

Luther returns four starters and 11 letterwinners from last season's 7-18 team that finished ninth in the Conference with a 3-13 record. The Norse two of their top three scorers from a year ago, including senior post player **Zac Ruckebeil**. Ruckebeil, an honorable mention all-conference selection, was the league's leading rebounder last season, averaging 8.6 per game. He also ranked second on the team with 8.6 points and 1.6 assists per game, ranking 23rd in the league in scoring. His scoring average jumped to 10.3 points per game in league play. Senior guard **Jake Waddle** averaged 6.8 points, 2.6 rebounds, and 1.6 assists per game, ranking 11th in the league in 3-point field goal percentage (39.4 percent) and ninth in made 3-pointers (1.64/gm).

Luther head coach **Mark Franzen** says, "Our returners have improved and our second recruiting class will make an impact on the program. The IAC lost some good players, so it will be interesting to see how things shake out this year. We feel like we will be in the hunt for a playoff spot in 2008-09."

Simpson returns three starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 7-18 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 4-12 record. Simpson has one of the top post players in the league to rely on in junior center **Tim Dunlavy**. Dunlavy was named First Team All-Iowa Conference after leading the Storm in scoring (15.9 ppg), rebounding (6.8 rpg), field goal shooting (53.4), and made field goals (150). He ranked fifth in the league in scoring, fourth in rebounding, fifth in field-goal percentage (53.4 percent) and eighth in free throw percentage (75.4 percent) and steals (1.2 spg). Joining Dunlavy up front is senior forward **David Ferezy**. Ferezy averaged 5.0 points, 5.7 rebounds, and 3.5 blocked shots per game last season. He led the IAC in blocked shots and ranked 11th in rebounding and 13th in steals (1.0 spg). Ferezy broke the Simpson school record for career blocks last season and enters 2008-09 with 175. He also broke his own single-season record with 83 last season and tied the single-game mark with nine against Cornell last February.

Simpson head coach **Bruce Wilson** says, "The Simpson men's basketball team returns a good nucleus from last year's young team. The team has worked very hard in the off-season and we look forward to seeing that hard work pay dividends on the court. The IAC will be a very competitive league and we are playing a very competitive non-conference schedule to help us prepare for this year's journey. Our senior leadership has been great and we look forward to the challenges ahead."

Wartburg returns four starters and six letterwinners from last season's 9-16 team that finished seventh in the Conference with a 6-10 record. The Knights should benefit significantly from the return of a pair of players that were lost to injury during the 2007-08 season. Junior guard **Mitch Eslick** was the team's leading scorer despite playing only 15 games, tallying 282 points (18.8 ppg). He also averaged 4.3 rebounds, 2.1 assists, and 1.3 steals. Senior point guard **Cashes Mason**, a Second Team All-Iowa Conference selection last season, averaged 11.3 points and a team-high 3.6 assists, ranking fourth in the IAC in assists, fifth in assist-to-turnover ratio (+1.07), 11th in field-goal percentage (47.5 percent), and 15th in scoring and free-throw percentage (67.0 percent). Junior wing **Jarrett Williams** turned in an 8.8-point per game effort before an injury sidelined him five games into the 2007-08 campaign. He scored a combined 33 points in back-to-back contests against Central and Simpson before going down.

Wartburg head coach **Dick Peth** says, "We are excited about the blend of newcomers and returnees. We look forward to competing in the ultra-competitive Iowa Conference again this year."