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2008 IOWA CONFERENCE MEN'S SOCCER PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Two-time defending league champion Loras College is the unanimous pick of Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) men's soccer coaches to win the 2008 IIAC title. The Duhawks received eight of nine first-place votes (coaches do not vote for their own team), totaling 72 points in the IIAC Men's Soccer Coaches' Poll.

Central College, which has placed third in the league each of the past two seasons, received the remaining first-place vote along with four second-place and three third-place votes to edge Wartburg College for second by a 62-61 margin. The Knights received five second-place votes and three third-place votes. The University of Dubuque edged Luther College, 46-44, for fourth place. The complete 2008 IIAC Men's Soccer Coaches' Poll follows:

| Rank | School (1st place votes) | Points | 2007 Record |
|------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| 1 | Loras (8) | 72 | 23-0-2, 8-0 IIAC |
| 2 | Central (1) | 62 | 14-4-3, 6-2 IIAC |
| 3 | Wartburg | 61 | 15-4-2, 7-1 IIAC |
| 4 | Dubuque | 46 | 10-8-1, 3-5 IIAC |
| 5 | Luther | 44 | 9-10-2, 5-3 IIAC |
| 6 | Simpson | 39 | 3-14-1, 3-5 IIAC |
| 7 | Coe | 33 | 3-11-2, 1-6-1 IIAC |
| 8 | Buena Vista | 23 | 4-13-1, 2-6 IIAC |
| 9 | Cornell | 16 | 1-11-1, 0-7-1 IIAC |

New Coaches: **Chris Garcia-Prats**, former assistant men's soccer coach at Trinity (Texas), is the new head coach at Luther. He replaces Doug Mello, who resigned after 18 years in Decorah to accept the head men's coaching position at Hendrix College in Conway, Ark. **T.J. Buchholz**, former head coach at Northwestern (Iowa), is the new coach at Wartburg. He replaces Jim Conlon, who resigned after eight seasons as men's and women's coach to become the head women's coach at Washington University in St. Louis.

Conference Tournament: The season opens Friday, August 29, with six teams in action. The Iowa Conference schedule opens Thursday, September 25 with a single game – Cornell at Central. The top-six teams following the regular season round-robin schedule qualify for the 2008 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 November 4 or 5. The semifinals and finals are November 7-8, hosted by the women's top seed.

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

Buena Vista returns four starters and seven letterwinners from last season's 4-13-1 team that finished seventh in the Conference with a 2-6 record. Sophomore midfielder Ben Welch returns as an offensive threat after tying for second on the team in points (5), goals (2) and assists (1). Another source of offense for the Beavers may come from senior midfielder/forward Jason Fernandez, who came off the bench to play in 17 of his 18 games and recorded one goal. Junior defender Cody Johnson started 13 of the 16 games in which he played in 2007, notching two goals.

Buena Vista head coach **Scott Phipps** says, "We are going to be one of if not the youngest squad in the conference this year with 15 new guys coming in. We look to lay the foundation for the future of this program and build on it with more strong recruiting classes in the years to come."

Central returns eight starters and 15 letterwinners from last season's 14-4-3 team that finished third in the Conference with a 6-2 record. The Dutch led the Iowa Conference in scoring last season, averaging 4.5 goals per league contest. Senior midfielder **Cruz Herr** is back after being named First Team All-Conference for the second consecutive season. Also a Second Team All-Central Region selection, he posted three goals and two assists in 21 games. Sophomore midfielder **Cody Jandik**, a Second Team All-Conference selection, is Central's top returning scorer. He tallied 28 points on 11 goals and six assists to rank second on the team. Much of the experience for the Dutch is found in the backfield. Senior goalkeeper **Greg Foote** and senior defender **Scott Erie** were second team selections, while sophomore defender **Daniel Hurd** received honorable mention. Junior defender **Erik Lundgren** was a second team honoree in 2006. Foote, now in his fourth year as a starter, led the IIAC with three shutouts in league play. Overall, the Dutch allowed 22 goals in 21 games in 2007, posting a 1.01 goals-against average.

Central head coach **Garry Laidlaw** says, "The IIAC continues to gain both regional and national respect. We are looking forward to what should be another exciting race in an increasingly competitive league!"

Coe returns eight starters and 16 letterwinners from last season's 3-11-2 team that finished eighth in the Conference with a 1-6-1 record. Coe looks to improve dramatically with 13 incoming freshmen and a strong core unit returning. The Kohawks' offense will be led by senior forward **Vance Rudolf** and freshmen **Joe Frerich** and **Tommy Wakeland**. Rudolf was second on last year's team with nine points on three goals and three assists. Defensively, Coe will be led by juniors **Nate Rowland** and **Scott Bolles**. Rowland started all 16 games, chipping in an assist. Bolles scored a goal in 13 games.

Coe head coach **Homer Screws** says, "I feel confident that the incoming team will exceed expectations now and in the future."

Cornell returns seven starters and seven letterwinners from last season's 1-11-1 team that finished ninth in the Conference with a 0-7-1 record. Junior defender **Kyle Roberts** started all 13 matches last season, registering two assists from the backfield. Sophomore forward **Kobina Essandoh** was second on the team in scoring last season with nine points on four goals and an assist. He also notched the Rams' lone game-winning goal. Junior midfielder **Joey Vandermause** scored a goal in 10 matches, while sophomore midfielder **Sungeun Kim** started 11 matches.

Cornell head coach **Dan Cotterill** says, "I think we will be a much-improved team this season. We have a full squad of guys who can really play soccer. We have some key freshmen who will contribute. Our team should be exciting to watch. I definitely believe we will qualify for the conference tournament."

Dubuque returns 10 starters and 15 letterwinners from last season's 10-8-1 team that finished tied for fifth in the Conference with a 3-5 record, making the school's first trip to the IIAC Men's Soccer Tournament. The Spartans return their top three scorers from 2007, all of whom recorded 17 or more points during the season. Senior midfielder **Chad Newquist** led the team in scoring with 19 points on three assists and a team-high eight goals. Sophomore midfielder **Idrissa Soumaoro**, a Second Team All-Iowa Conference selection, tallied 18 points on eight goals and two assists, while senior forward **Nick Cookston**, a three-time All-IIAC performer, scored six goals and added five assists. Sophomore defender Colin Brice anchors a defense looking to finish in the top half of the IIAC statistical rankings.

Dubuque head coach **Jason Berna** says, "Last year, we took a big step making the Iowa Conference playoffs. This year, we are looking to raise the bar again with an experienced group of players returning and several newcomers that we expect to make a big impact."

Loras returns eight starters and 18 letterwinners from last season's 23-0-2 team that won the Conference title with an 8-0 record and reached the National Semifinals of the NCAA Division III Men's Soccer Championship Tournament. Six All-Conference performers, including four first-teamers, return to lead the Duhawks in 2008. Senior defender Matt Splittgerber and sophomore goalkeeper Nate DuBois, both First Team All-Conference selections, anchor a defense that ranked first nationally in save percentage (0.944), second in team goals-against average (0.33), and third in shutout percentage (0.36). The Duhawks limited IIAC opponents to one goal and allowed just six all season. DuBois went 15-0-1 in net with 64 saves and seven shutouts. He was the 2007 national Division III statistical champion in save percentage (.955) and ranked second in Division III in goals-against average (0.20). Junior midfielder Santiago Mejia, a Second Team NSCAA/adidas® All-American last season, finished second on the team in scoring with 25 points on five goals and 15 assists and owns the Loras career assists record after just two seasons. Mejia also ranked fifth in the IIAC in scoring with 11 points in league play. Miguel Bonilla, a dynamic player in the midfield as a freshman in 2007, was fourth on the team in scoring with 20 points on eight goals and four assists. Mejia and Bonilla were also named to the All-Iowa Conference First Team last season.

Loras head coach Dan Rothert says, "We are very excited to build on an unbelievable 2007 season. With 18 of 22 letterwinners and 7 All-IIAC performers returning, on paper we look to be very solid again and are excited about the possibilities, but also realize it will be very challenging road. We definitely have a target on our back both in the conference and on a national level. Our non-conference schedule will really prepare us for the tough and most important conference schedule. With a very strong group of newcomers to blend in and our pre-season trip to Costa Rica, we are ready to get started."

Luther returns five starters and 12 letterwinners from last season's 9-10-2 team that finished fourth in the Conference with a 5-3 record. The offense will be strong for the Norse as they return four of their top five scorers from 2007. Junior midfielder Adam Pyzdrowski was Luther's second-leading scorer with 15 points on five goals and five assists. Senior forward Nic Barclay, a Second Team All-Conference selection in 2007, was third in scoring with 14 points on five goals and four assists. Junior forward Jimmy Laroque added 11 points on five goals and an assist, ranking fourth. Senior midfielder David Keller added a goal and an assist last season and has started 54 of 56 career matches.

Luther head coach Chris Garcia-Prats says, "The IIAC is an extremely competitive conference with two teams the past two years representing the conference in the NCAA Tournament. The returning group, along with the addition of some young talent, look to compete for a conference title and get Luther back to the NCAA Tournament."

Simpson returns 10 starters and 18 letterwinners from last season's 3-14-1 team that finished tied for fifth in the Conference with a 3-5 record. With only one starter lost to graduation, the Storm will be led by juniors Corey Miller and Connor Skultety. Miller, a two-time All-Conference selection, led Simpson in points (10) and assists (4) last season. Skultety was chosen honorable mention All-Conference last fall by the league's coaches. He started in 16 matches, scoring one goal and posting one assist for a total of three points. Sophomore forwards Erik Montelongo and Jim Frizzell will battle for time up front. The pair ranked second and third, respectively, on the team in scoring. Montelongo scored eight points on three goals and two assists, while Frizzell scored seven points on three goals and an assist. Junior goalkeeper Jeremy Ward posted a 2.61 goals-against average in 10 matches last season.

Simpson head coach Mike Wilson says, "With the graduation of just one senior, we return a team that gained valuable experience last fall. Although we did not get the results we wanted, I'm confident we will be a team that can not be looked past. I anticipate the conference to be closely contested and our goal is to place ourselves in a position to compete for the conference title."

Wartburg returns seven starters and 15 letterwinners from last season's 15-4-2 team that finished second in the Conference with a 7-1 record and advanced to the NCAA Division III Championship tournament for the fifth consecutive year. The Knights will look to senior midfielder/forward Elvis Alicic to fill the void left by the graduation of the team's top four scorers from 2007. In 21 games last season, Alicic scored eight points on three goals and two assists. Senior defender Robert Acosta will anchor a defense that has become one of the best in the region, surrendering only 15 goals in 21 matches last season. Junior goalkeeper Trent Michael, an honorable mention All-Conference selection in 2007, took over starting duties early in the year and turned in an 0.67 goals-against average with 55 saves and four shutouts.

Wartburg head coach T.J. Buchholz says, "We have great experience and depth coming back from a very successful team last fall. We hope to continue to challenge them to keep moving forward this season"

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