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## 2010 IOWA CONFERENCE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

**CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . .** Defending league champion **Central College**, which captured its league-best 30th Iowa Conference football title in 2009, is the unanimous pick of the league's other schools to win the 2010 IIAC football title. The Dutch received all eight possible first-place votes (coaches are not allowed to rank their own team), totaling 72 points to stand eight markers clear of fellow 2009 NCAA participant Coe College, which received the remaining first-place vote to go with six second-place picks and one for third.

**Wartburg College**, which last season dropped three games in league play for the first time since 1997, is picked third by the coaches, garnering 58 points behind three runner-up votes and four third-place votes. **University of Dubuque** is fourth with 51 points followed by **Buena Vista University** in fifth with 43 points and **Luther College** in sixth with 39 points. The complete 2010 IIAC football coaches' poll follows:

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2009 Record
1	Central (8)	72	10-1, 8-0 IIAC
2	Coe (1)	64	10-2, 7-1 IIAC
3	Wartburg	58	6-4, 5-3 IIAC
4	Dubuque	51	5-5, 4-4 IIAC
5	Buena Vista	43	4-6, 3-5 IIAC
6	Luther	39	5-5, 4-4 IIAC
7	Simpson	29	3-7, 2-6 IIAC
8	Loras	23	2-8, 2-6 IIAC
9	Cornell	13	2-8, 1-7 IIAC

**Preseason National Polls:** Defending Conference Champion Central and 2009 NCAA participant Coe are included in multiple preseason national polls. Central is ranked seventh by D3football.com, ninth by *The Sporting News*, 10<sup>th</sup> in *USA Today Sports Weekly* and 13<sup>th</sup> by *Lindy's*. Coe is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> by D3football.com, 18<sup>th</sup> by *The Sporting News*, and 20<sup>th</sup> in *USA Today Sports Weekly*. Wartburg also received a mention, ranking 22<sup>nd</sup> in the *Lindy's* poll.

**Preseason All-Americans:** Three Iowa Conference football players were named to preseason All-America teams. Dubuque senior wide receiver **Michael Zweifel** was a first-team pick by *The Sporting News* and the D3Senior Classic, and was tabbed for the second team offense by D3football.com, *Lindy's* and Consensus Draft Services (CDS). Luther linebacker **Kyle McGivney** was a first team pick by the D3 Senior Classic and CDS as well as a second team pick by D3football.com, while Coe defensive lineman **Frank Weymiller** picked up second team honors from *Lindy's*.

**Games to Watch:** Two games on the 2010 schedule were singled out by national publications as games to watch. Wartburg's season-opening matchup with Monmouth (Ill.) and record-setting quarterback Alex Tanney on September 4 was one of five tabbed by *Lindy's*, while *The Sporting News* selected the September 25 matchup between Central and Coe at Clark Field as one of six that Division III followers should keep their eyes on.

**New Coaches:** **Vince Brautigam** is the new head coach at Cornell, taking over for Matt Dillon. Brautigam is no stranger to the Iowa Conference, having spent eight years as the head man at Dubuque from 2001 to 2008. His 2006 team finished 6-4 to snap a streak of 19 consecutive losing seasons at Dubuque. The Spartans followed that up with a 7-

3 mark in 2007. Prior to Dubuque, Brautigam spent 11 seasons at Mount Senario (1990-2000), winning or sharing eight Upper Midwest Athletic Conference titles.

***Season Openers:*** The season begins Thursday, September 2 with Dubuque playing host to Rockford under the lights at Chalmers Field. The rest of the league takes to the field Saturday, September 4. The 2010 Iowa Conference season begins Sept. 18 with four games – Dubuque at Central, Coe at Luther, Loras at Simpson, and Cornell at Wartburg. Buena Vista has the opening weekend of league play off before Simpson visits Storm Lake September 25.

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

## Buena Vista University Beavers



**Head Coach:** Jay Anderson (5th year, 20-20 overall)

**2009 Record:** 4-6 overall, 3-5 IIAC (6th)

**Starters Returning/Lost:** 7/8 offense, 8/6 defense, 0/1 special teams

**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** 29/18

**Iowa Conference Titles (Last):** 4 (1978)

**NCAA Playoff Appearances (Last/Result):** 2 (1986; lost to Central 37-0 in first round)

**Buena Vista** returns 15 starters and 29 letterwinners from last season's 4-6 team that finished sixth in the Conference with a 3-5 record. The Beavers return a wealth of experience up front offensively as four of five offensive line as well as the starting tight end from 2009 are back. Among them is senior **Jerod Wolff**, one of this year's captains.

Junior running back **Michael Black** is the team's top returning rusher from last season, gaining 346 yards on 120 carries. Sophomore **John Hill** will help split the load. He had 82 carries for 224 yards in 2009. **Larry Marcel** is the team's top returning receiver after making 20 grabs for 279 yards last year.

The Beavers return eight to a defensive squad that finished third in the Iowa Conference in scoring defense (19.8 points per game). Junior strong safety **Alan Bladt** leads the unit after finishing seventh in the Iowa Conference with a team-high 90 tackles last season. Bladt, a first team all-IIAC selection, also had 5.5 tackles for loss, two interceptions, three forced fumbles, and three fumble recoveries. Senior linebacker **Brian Bode** ranked just behind Bladt on the conference's tackles chart, placing ninth with 86. He added five fackles for loss, 3.5 sacks, an interception, two fumble recoveries, and a forced fumble.

Up front, senior **Dan Mikels** and junior **Aaron Giese** anchor the line. Mikels, another first team all-league pick, had 41 tackles, ranked seventh in the IIAC with 8.5 tackles for loss, and posted three sacks. Giese had 31 tackles, 1.5 tackles for loss, 1.5 sacks, and broke up two passes.

Buena Vista head coach **Jay Anderson** says, "We are excited to get going with the 2010 season. We have a good group of returning players, but there will be position battles in camp for our offensive skill positions. The IIAC will be very competitive once again in 2010."

## Central College Dutch

**Head Coach:** Jeff McMartin (7th year at Central, 53-13 overall)

**2009 Record:** 10-1 overall, 8-0 IIAC (champion)



**Starters Returning/Lost:** 8/3 offense, 7/4 defense, 4/1 special teams

**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** 52/13

**Iowa Conference Titles (Last):** 30 (2009)

**NCAA Playoff Appearances (Last/Result):** 20 (2009; lost to Mary Hardin-Baylor 42-40 in first round)

**Central** returns 19 starters and 52 letterwinners from last season's 10-1 team that ran the table for the school's 30th Iowa Conference football title and advanced to the first round of the NCAA Division III Football Championship. The Dutch return 10 of 14 All-Conference picks from a year ago plus an honorable mention selection, including seven of nine first-teamers.

Even though eight starters return on offense, the tone for the Dutch will be set early by an offensive line that returns four members from a unit that ranked 18th nationally in NCAA Division III in rushing offense at 237.91 yards per game. Senior tackles **Joey Shoemaker** and **Lee Schroeder** are returning all-Iowa Conference picks, while guard **A.J. Santon** received honorable mention. Senior tight end **Jordan Leuschen** will provide support for the line as a blocker, but has also shown himself to be a capable receiver. He finished second on the team in every major receiving category with 21 catches for 299 yards and six touchdowns.

Junior quarterback **Nate Snead** returns to direct the Dutch offense after earning first team all-league honors a year ago. Snead threw for 1,264 yards and had 17 TD strikes to go with only three interceptions. He also ranked second on the team in rushing with 872 yards on 155 carries and a team-high 15 touchdowns. In addition to Leuschen, Snead looks to have a pair of very familiar targets in older brother **Jeremy** as well as junior **Brett Wilkin**. The elder Snead, also a first team all-IIAC pick in 2009, is back after being granted a medical hardship. He led Central in receiving with 46 catches for 541 yards and nine touchdowns. Wilkin, a first team all-conference pick as a return specialist, ranked third on the team with 19 catches for 223 yards.

Central should be stout up front defensively with defensive end **Aaron Steenhoek** and **Shane Wong** flanking nose guard **Brady Hill**. Wong, a senior, was a first team all-league pick last season, finishing with 30 tackles with 14.0 tackles for loss and 10 sacks, ranking second in the IIAC in each of the latter two categories. Steenhoek, another senior, was injured midway through 2009 but not before amassing 26 tackles including 10 tackles for loss and 6.5 sacks. He would have ranked fifth in the league in both categories had he played in enough games to be ranked. Hill, a junior named Second Team All-IIAC as a sophomore, made 36 stops, including 9.5 tackles for loss and seven sacks, where he ranked fourth in the IIAC.

At linebacker, senior **Greg Best** returns on the strong side after earning second team all-league honors in 2009 when he posted 56 tackles, including 33 solo stops, and six tackles for loss. Opposite Best will be sophomore **Keith Rush**, who posted 51 tackles, had one interception, and recovered one fumble.

The Dutch swept all three First Team All-Conference specialist positions last year and each has returned. Key to the field position battle will be three-time first team all-IIAC punter **Kurtis Brondyke**, who averaged 38.6 yards per punt last season while pinning the opponent inside the 20 on 11 occasions. Senior **Jake Viggers** led all IIAC kickers and ranked sixth among all players in scoring last season with 67 points. He converted seven of 10 field goal attempts and was true on 46 of 51 PAT attempts. Juniors Brett Wilkin and **Mike Furlong** will be a potent 1-2 punch in the kick return game. Each averaged 7.7 yards per punt return last season, while Wilkin out-averaged Furlong, 26.5 yards per return to 25.5 on kickoffs as the pair posted the top two kick return averages in the league.

Central head coach **Jeff McMartin** says, "The Iowa Conference will be very balanced this year. There are many returning players from each program that will make each week exciting. We are looking forward to another challenging season."

## Coe College Kohawks

**Head Coach:** Steve Staker (3rd year at Coe, 14-8 overall)

**2009 Record:** 10-2 overall, 7-1 IIAC (2nd)

**Starters Returning/Lost:** 8/3 offense, 6/5 defense, 2/0 special teams

**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** 32/17

**Iowa Conference Titles (Last):** 3 (2005)

**NCAA Playoff Appearances (Last/Result):** 6 (2009; beat Saint John's (Minn.) 34-27 in first round; lost to St. Thomas (Minn.) 34-7 in second round)



**Coe** returns 16 starters and 32 letterwinners from last season's 10-2 team that finished second in the Conference with a 7-1 record and advanced to the second round of the NCAA Division III Football Championship.

Reigning league MVP **Brad Boyle** returns under center to direct a Kohawk offense that ranked second in the IIAC in passing (251.1 ypg) and third in scoring (28.9 ppg). Boyle threw for 2,639 yards with 19 touchdowns and opened the year with an NCAA Division III-record 305 consecutive passing attempts without an interception before being picked off by Cornell in the regular season finale. He was also Coe's second leading rusher with 337 on 134 carries and a league-leading 15 rushing touchdowns. Through the air, Boyle will have no shortage of targets as senior **Tyler Takes**, junior **Nick Ratchford**, and sophomore **Jared Kuehner** return to lead the receiving corps. Takes hauled in 40 passes for 567 yards and eight touchdowns, while Ratchford caught 15 balls for 144 yards and three touchdowns in just four games. Kuehner added 14 catches for 178 yards and three scores. Protecting Boyle will be an offensive line anchored by 2009 first team all-conference center **Logan Weber**.

Defensively, Coe will need to replace a trio of linebackers that combined for 306 tackles in 2009, but returns a formidable group up front lead by sophomore defensive end **Frank Weymiller** and junior defensive end **Nate Clear**. Weymiller, a first team all-conference pick and D3football.com All-America honorable mention, ranked third in Division III with 15.5 sacks and 16th nationally with 21.0 tackles for loss. Overall, he recorded 90 stops to rank 13th in the league. Clear totaled 7.5 sacks to rank third in the league as part of a 41-tackle season. Strong safety **Seth Johnson** also returns after recording 51 tackles, 10 pass break-ups and three interceptions in 2009.

The Kohawks' kicking game should also be solid as placekicker **Elliot Rausa**, punter **Chase Cooling**, and kick returner Takes all return. Rausa, a second team all-league pick as a sophomore in 2008, ranked ninth in the IIAC in scoring (second among kickers) with 59 points. He hit 41 of 45 PATs and six of 13 field goal attempts. Cooling ranked fourth in punting average at 35.1 yards per kick, but placed 19 of 56 kicks inside his opponent's 20-yard line. Takes, a second team all-IIAC pick at return specialist averaged 10.1 yards per punt return and 20.4 yards per kick return.

Coe head coach **Steve Staker** says, "I feel we could be in the thick of the battle barring injuries to key people. Having (quarterback) Brad Boyle and a number of talented receivers back along with Frank Weymiller and Nate Clear anchoring a veteran defensive line allows us to be cautiously optimistic. I also feel we have an excellent weapon in senior placekicker Elliot Rausa. As is the case every year, the balance in the league makes it very difficult to predict how the conference will play out. Central would have to be considered the favorite and then it becomes a dog fight."



## Cornell College Rams

**Head Coach:** Vince Brautigam (1st year at Cornell, 89-105 overall)

**2009 Record:** 2-8 overall, 1-7 IIAC (9th)

**Starters Returning/Lost:** 10/2 offense, 5/6 defense, 0/2 special teams

**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** 35/18

**Iowa Conference Titles (Last):** 0 (n/a)

**NCAA Playoff Appearances (Last/Result):** 0 (n/a)

**Cornell** returns 15 starters and 35 letterwinners from last year's 2-8 team that finished ninth in the Conference with a 1-7 record. The Rams snapped a league-record-tying 34-game conference losing streak with a November 7 win over Loras.

The Rams will benefit from having an experienced offense as 10 of 11 starters return, each with at least eight games under their belt from 2009. Sophomore quarterback Andrew Burdick started all 10 games a year ago, setting single-season school records for passing yards (2,168), pass completions (180) and total offense (2,619), while also setting a single-game record for completions (28). He threw 15 touchdown passes and rushed for a team-high 451 yards on 163 carries with two touchdowns.

While favorite target Alex Macey has graduated, senior wide receiver Kyle Tierney returns. Tierney started eight games last season, hauling in 34 passes for 365 yards and three touchdowns including a 10-catch, 118-yard performance at Buena Vista. Sophomore Sean Langan will help anchor the Cornell offensive front. Langan started all 10 games at left guard in 2009.

Defensively, senior safety Joe Barlow and junior linebacker Tyler Bailey return after starting all 10 games a year ago. Barlow made 52 stops, broke up four passes, and intercepted a pass, while Bailey is Cornell's top returning tackler from 2009 with 55 stops. He also posted a team-high 7.0 tackles for loss. Up front, Zach Freeman will help anchor defensive line after posting 20 tackles last season.

Cornell head coach **Vince Brautigam** says, "Our senior leadership has been phenomenal and our freshmen are eager. Our goal is to improve each week and to put ourselves in a position to win. Until someone bumps the top three out, you would have to say they are the early favorites. The rest of the conference teams are very capable of making a run and beating any conference team on any given day."

## University of Dubuque Spartans

**Head Coach:** Stan Zweifel (2nd year at UD, 25-26 overall)

**2009 Record:** 5-5 overall, 4-4 IIAC (tie-4th)

**Starters Returning/Lost:** 8/3 offense, 8/3 defense, 2/2 special teams

**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** 34/12

**Iowa Conference Titles (Last):** 6 (1980)

**NCAA Playoff Appearances (Last/Result):** 2 (1980; lost to Minnesota-Morris 41-35 in first round)



**Dubuque** returns 18 starters and 34 letterwinners from last season's 5-5 team that tied for fourth in the Conference with a 4-4 record.

Offensively, the Spartans return the nucleus from an offense that led the league in passing offense (282.1 ypg) and ranked second in total offense (408.0 ypg). Senior wide receiver **Michael Zweifel** will certainly be a focal point of the offense in 2010 after catching 111 passes for 1,522 yards and 15 touchdowns a year ago. He was the 2009 NCAA Division III statistical national champion in receiving yards per game (152.2 ypg) and ranked second in receptions per game (11.1 rpg) while also setting IIAC single-game and single-season marks for receptions and receiving yards. Zweifel also led the league in scoring with 96 points.

Also back on offense for Dubuque are dynamic running back **Justin Spaulding**, junior wide receiver **Demacus Fleming**, and sophomore tight end **Miles Hookstead**. A junior, Spaulding benefited from sharing the field with Zweifel as he rushed for 932 yards on 198 carries and eight touchdowns to rank second in the league in scoring. Fleming caught 37 passes for 677 yards and six scores, while Hookstead made 24 catches for 259 yards and three TDs.

Perhaps the only question for Dubuque head coach Stan Zweifel is who will line up behind an offensive line anchored by sophomore **Richard Skaife** and direct the Spartans' fortunes at quarterback.

On defense, the Spartans will look to senior defensive end **Albert Hightower** and senior strong safety **Jajuan Burton** to provide leadership. Hightower registered 3.5 sacks, while Burton made 68 tackles (47 solo), broke up five passes and intercepted another. Sophomores **Ryan Stodden** and **Leonard Brady Jr.** will also figure prominently into the Dubuque defensive scheme. Brady, a defensive back, made 40 tackles, intercepted two passes and broke up four others. Stodden made 38 tackles.

Dubuque head coach **Stan Zweifel** says, "We are still very young and will play predominantly sophomores. We have to improve our special teams to move up in the standings."



## Loras College Duhawks



**Head Coach:** Steve Osterberger (5th year at Loras, 46-54 overall)

**2009 Record:** 2-8 overall, 2-6 IIAC (tie-7th)

**Starters Returning/Lost:** 7/4 offense, 6/5 defense, 2/2 special teams

**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** 31/11

**Iowa Conference Titles (Last):** 0 (n/a)

**NCAA Playoff Appearances (Last/Result):** 0 (n/a)

**Loras** returns 13 starters and 31 letterwinners from last season's 2-8 team that tied for seventh in the Conference with a 2-6 record.

The Duhawks return seven offensively and will have a good mix of youth and experience in 2010. There will be some holes to fill in the offensive line and at running back, but there is some depth in the rest of the skill positions. All-conference offensive lineman Matt Maginot has graduated, but 2008 second team pick **Mike Schaeffer** is back to anchor the line for another year. Junior quarterback **Vaughn Gesing** is back behind center after throwing for 1,884 yards and eight touchdowns. He set four Loras passing records last season. He will have a pair of experienced receivers to throw to as junior **Gavin Kaiser** and senior **John Ingersoll** are back. Ingersoll caught a team-high 36 passes for 483 yards and four touchdowns last season. Kaiser, a co-captain, had 28 catches for 277 yards and a receiving touchdown, but also contributed on the ground with 22 rushes for 55 yards and six scores.

Kaiser and senior **Nick Lloyd** also represent a very capable return tandem for the Duhawks. Kaiser averaged 24.2 yards per kickoff return to rank fourth in the league. Lloyd ranked sixth on the same list with a 22.7 yard per return average and also ranked second in punt return average with an 8.6 yard per return average.

Loras brings back a wealth of experience in the defensive backfield and secondary, but will need to some new faces to step up on the line as brothers Kale and Kyle McCormick, both second team all-IIAC picks last year, have graduated. Senior defensive tackle **Ben Driscoll** posted 46 tackles, 3.5 tackles for loss, and 0.5 sacks last season.

Junior linebacker **Zach Myers** made 48 stops, including four for loss, one sack, and an interception last season, while senior defensive back **Joe Gruben** intercepted one pass in addition to 31 tackles.

Loras head coach **Steve Osterberger** says, "The 2010 season will be another competitive one in the Iowa Conference. I continue to believe that every week in this league is challenge for each of our nine teams. Four quarters of consistent football on both sides of the ball will put us in position to improve our record from a year ago. I like our freshman class, too. Some of them will push for time once they are familiar with the systems we run. Elmhurst and Rockford will provide new looks for us in the non-conference and get us ready for Iowa Conference games."





## Luther College Norse

**Head Coach:** Mike Durnin (3rd at Luther, 10-10 overall)

**2009 Record:** 5-5 overall, 4-4 IIAC (tie-4th)

**Starters Returning/Lost:** 6/5 offense, 5/6 defense, 0/2 special teams

**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** 34/17

**Iowa Conference Titles (Last):** 11 (1978)

**NCAA Postseason Appearances (Last/Result):** 2 (1972; to Capital [Ohio] 34-17 in Amos Alonzo Stagg Bowl)

**Luther** returns 11 starters and 34 letterwinners from last season's 5-5 team that finished tied for fourth in the Conference with a 4-4 record.

Junior linebacker **Kyle McGivney** made a big splash in 2009, ranking second in Division III by averaging an astounding 14.1 tackles per game to earn first team all-IIAC and second team D3football all-region honors. McGivney also picked off four passes and broke up four more. Senior cornerback **Josh Patterson**, a first team all-league pick, is a three-year starter who posted 47 tackles, broke up 11 passes and intercepted another in 2009. Senior defensive end **Zach Kotz** is the Norse's only returning starter up front, posting 18 tackles, two tackles for loss, and three pass breakups.

The Norse return six starters on offense from last season, including dual-threat quarterback **Chris Reynolds**. Reynolds, a junior who has started all 20 games of his career, ranked sixth in the league in total offense averaging 221.2 yards per game. He ran for 536 yards and six touchdowns and threw for 1,676 yards and nine scores. Protecting Reynolds when he is in the pocket will be an offensive line led by senior guard **Shaun Vegter**. Assisting in those duties will be senior tight end **Trent Stonerook**. Stonerook caught 16 balls for 140 yards and a touchdown. Junior receiver **Steven Thompson** is Luther's top returning receiver with 22 catches for 244 yards and a touchdown, while senior **Ryan Monroe** will step up at running back after gaining 68 yards on limited carries last season.

Luther head coach **Mike Durnin** says, "I believe 2010 will be a great year in the IIAC with any team capable of winning on any given Saturday. It will be very difficult for any team to 'run the table' during league play. We, at Luther, are looking to increase our offensive production and continue to build on our defense and special teams. Our players are very excited about the direction we are heading in the program."

## Simpson College Storm



**Head Coach:** Jim Glogowski (3rd year at Simpson, 10-10 overall)

**2009 Record:** 3-7 overall, 2-6 IIAC (tie-7th)

**Starters Returning/Lost:** 5/6 offense, 5/6 defense, 3/4 special teams

**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** 39/25

**Iowa Conference Titles (Last):** 12 (1997)

**NCAA Playoff Appearances (Last/Result):** 6 (2003; lost to St. Norbert 26-20 [2OT] in first round)

**Simpson** returns 13 starters and 39 letterwinners from last season's 3-7 team that tied for seventh in the Conference with a 2-6 record. One of the keys to how the Storm rebounds offensively in 2010 will depend upon how well a rebuilt offensive line meshes. Center **Brian Tjossem** is the lone returning starter from a unit that was the second-best rushing offense in the league. Simpson will also need to find a replacement for graduated quarterback **Tyson Unkrich**. Whoever that individual is, though, will have plenty of weapons. Wide receiver **Taylor Rogers** is back after a breakout freshman season where he caught 28 balls and led the team with 505 receiving yards and 11 touchdown catches. His 11 touchdown catches left him ranked fifth in the league in scoring. He also caught touchdown passes in seven consecutive games and in eight of 10 games during the year.

Senior fullback **Jake Rissi** saw time at tight end, fullback, and running back, rushing 36 times for 205 yards and three touchdowns and caught 11 passes for 143 yards and a touchdown. Senior running back **Renauld Shelton** played in nine games, starting six, and rushed for 323 yards and four touchdowns, including a career-high 179 yards against Buena Vista which ranked as the top single-game rushing performance in the IIAC in 2009.

Defensively, the Storm will rely on the efforts of junior outside linebacker **Braden Everding**. Everding started all 10 games last season, posting a team-high 92 tackles to rank fourth in the league. He also posted 4.5 tackles for loss and intercepted a pass. Up front, senior defensive tackle **Vinni Smith** started all 10 games with 11 tackles, a sack, and two tackles for loss.

Simpson head coach **Jim Glogowski** says, "I look for our kids to give great effort week in and week out. I believe our kids have worked hard to improve during the offseason and we are excited to get things going. There is no doubt in my mind that this will be another exciting season in the Iowa Conference."

## Wartburg College Knights



**Head Coach:** Rick Wills (11th year at Wartburg, 95-24 overall)

**2009 Record:** 6-4 overall, 5-3 IIAC (3rd)

**Starters Returning/Lost:** 7/4 offense, 7/4 defense, 2/2 special teams

**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** 33/20

**Iowa Conference Titles (Last):** 11 (2008)

**NCAA Playoff Appearances (Last/Result):** 8 (2008; beat Wis.-Stevens Point 26-21 in first round; beat Monmouth [Ill.] 30-28 in second round; lost to Wis.-Whitewater 34-17 in quarterfinals)

**Wartburg** returns 16 starters and 33 letterwinners from last season's 6-4 team that finished third in the Conference with a 5-3 record. An experienced offensive line should allow the Knights' offense to breathe a little easier while they adjust to life without graduated two-time all-conference quarterback Nick Yordi. Senior center **Morgan O'Connor** is a three-year starter and a two-time First Team All-Iowa Conference pick, junior tackle **Jon Orr** earned second team all-league honors, and senior tackle **Spenser Herkelman** is a three-year starter who earned honorable mention from the league's coaches in 2009.

Behind that line, sophomore running back **Reese Thompson** will attempt to match or better the output from his maiden collegiate season in 2009 where he ran for 699 yards and 10 touchdowns and caught 14 passes for 198 yards. Senior wide receiver **Matt Wickert** had a breakout junior season for the Knights, turning in a team-high 44 catches for 552 yards and a touchdown. Senior wide receiver **Matt Gustafson** will be a three-year starter. In 2009, he hauled in 43 passes for 546 yards and a team-high six receiving touchdowns.

The Knights' defense will be led by linebacker **Blake Suckow** and defensive backs **Andrew Creary** and **Josh VanDenHul**. Creary and Suckow, both seniors, each ranked among the IIAC's top tacklers in 2009. Creary's versatility allowed him to rank third in the league in tackles with 100 and second in the league in interceptions with four. He also posted 2.5 tackles for loss and was named first team all-league. Suckow, a second team all-IIAC pick, ranked seventh in the IIAC with 90 tackles, including 12.5 for loss and a sack. VanDenHul, a junior, posted 48 tackles and broke up six passes.

VanDenHul was also a major contributor on special teams where is a two-time All-Iowa Conference selection. He was the league's top punt returner, averaging 10.2 yards per try, while ranking fifth in kickoff returns with a 23.2 yard per return average. The Knights also return second team all-league punter **Robby Salmon**. Salmon, a junior, posted the IIAC's top average last season at 40.3 yards per kick. He pinned opponents inside the 20 on 12 occasions and had five kicks of 50 yards or greater.

Wartburg head coach **Rick Willis** says, "The 2010 season will be both exciting and challenging. Our tradition will be highlighted as we celebrate the 75th season of Wartburg football. Our non-conference schedule will certainly test us early, and the Iowa Conference will be as tough as ever. Our returners have worked hard and are motivated to compete for a championship."

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