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GLIAC Women's Basketball Coaches Pick Grand Valley State to Win North Division, Gannon and Hillsdale Tie for Top Rank in South

BAY CITY, Mich. -- The head women's basketball coaches of the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) chose Grand Valley State University to win the North Division while Gannon University and Hillsdale College were chosen to top the South Division.

Grand Valley State received six of the seven first-place votes it was eligible for and tallied 36 points. Michigan Tech University received one first-place vote and finished with 31 total points, which was good for second place. Lake Superior State University tallied 24 points and finished third in the poll, followed by Ferris State University, which finished fourth with 23 points in the poll. Northwood University (15), Northern Michigan University (12), and Saginaw Valley State University (6) rounded out the field finishing fifth, sixth, and seventh in the poll, respectively.

In the South Division, Gannon and Hillsdale tied for first in the poll with three first place votes each and 21 points total. Third place Ashland University finished only three points behind the two teams with 18 points. The University of Findlay tallied 16 points and finished fourth in the poll. Mercyhurst College (8) and Wayne State University (7) were picked to finish fifth and sixth, respectively.

Each of the GLIAC's 13 coaches ranked the teams in the division in which they play, but were not allowed to vote for their own team. The first-place team on the North Division ballot received six points, while the second-place team received five points, etc. The first-place team in the South Division received five points, while the second-place team received four points, etc.

Grand Valley State claimed the GLIAC title last season, defeating Gannon in the Conference Tournament finals. The 2005-06 GLIAC tournament quarterfinal games will be played on Tuesday, Feb. 28, on campus sites with the higher seeds hosting the games. The semifinals and finals will be hosted by the highest remaining seed on Friday, March 3 and Saturday, March 4.

GLIAC women's basketball teams open play on Tuesday, Nov. 15 with conference play beginning Thursday, Dec. 1.

2005-06 GLIAC Preseason Women's Basketball Coaches Poll

<i>North Division</i>		
<i>Rank</i>	<i>School (first-place votes)</i>	<i>Points</i>
1.	Grand Valley (6)	36
2.	Michigan Tech (1)	31
3.	Lake Superior	24
4.	Ferris State	23
5.	Northwood	15
6.	Northern Michigan	12
7.	Saginaw Valley	6

<i>South Division</i>		
1.	Gannon (3)	21
	Hillsdale (3)	21
3.	Ashland	18
4.	Findlay	16
5.	Mercyhurst	8
6.	Wayne State	7

2004-05 GLIAC Women's Basketball Final Standings

<i>North Division</i>	
<i>School</i>	<i>Record (GLIAC)</i>
Lake Superior State	22-7 (16-2)
Grand Valley State	28-6 (16-2)
Michigan Tech	21-8 (15-3)
Ferris State	11-17 (9-9)
Northern Michigan	16-12 (8-10)
Northwood	9-18 (5-13)
Saginaw Valley State	7-19 (3-15)

<i>South Division</i>	
Ashland	20-9 (11-6)
Gannon	19-11 (10-7)
Hillsdale	18-9 (9-8)
Findlay	11-16 (5-12)
Mercyhurst	8-19 (4-13)
Wayne State	6-20 (3-14)

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The following are season previews on each of the GLIAC's 13 Women's Basketball Teams:

Ashland University: Ashland, the two-time defending GLIAC South Division champion, is aiming to continue its recent string of success in 2005-06. The Eagles will be led by junior guard Amber Rall, the team's leading scorer (17.1 ppg.) and a first team All-GLIAC South selection last season. Gone from last year's 20-9 squad are All-GLIAC posts Beth Everman and Jackie Mason. Junior forward Catherine Portyrata will be head coach Sue Ramsey's top option under the basket this year. Portyrata averaged 10.0 ppg., and 6.4 rpg., a year ago and broke AU's single-season field goal percentage record, connecting on her attempts at a .640 clip. Ramsey is entering her 11th season at Ashland and is 150-126 with the Eagles.

Ferris State University: Eighth-year Ferris State University women's basketball head coach Tracey Bloodworth-Fisk returns eight letterwinners from last season's 11-17 overall finish. The Bulldogs also welcome the return of junior guards Erin Miller (Niles) and Kristin Reinhart (East Lansing) back from injuries sustained a year ago. Reinhart averaged 15.4 points per game and attained All-GLIAC North Division Second-Team accolades in 20 outings last season while Miller missed all but the initial two contests after totaling 17 points per contest and being selected as a first-team all-league pick in 2003-04. Bloodworth-Fisk, who ranks as the school's all-time winningest coach, has compiled a 117-78 (.600) record to date and is one win shy of matching Pat Dolan's school-record total of 118 wins. Ferris placed fourth in the GLIAC North Division with a 9-9 conference ledger last season and advanced to the league's postseason tournament for the sixth consecutive year. The Bulldogs also recorded their ninth-straight season with 10 or more victories.

University of Findlay: The Oilers are coming off of an injury laden season which saw them finish 11-16. Head coach Carolyn Mair returns for her fifth season and has an overall record of 51-58 with the Oilers. As a team, the Oilers return ten players who saw significant action from a year ago and are led by 2004 First Team All-GLIAC selection Michelle Vorst. Vorst, a senior guard, averaged 14.0 points per game last year and is poised for another great season in 2005-06. Also returning to aid the Oilers is junior guard Ralphie Beal. Beal was named to the GLIAC All-Defensive Team last year and averaged 9.0 points and 3.9 rebounds per game one year ago.

Grand Valley State University: Grand Valley State returns 12 letterwinners, including four starters from last season's team that finished with a school best 28-6 record. The Lakers claimed their first-ever GLIAC Tournament and Great Lakes Regional Championships titles en route to its first-ever Elite Eight appearance. GVSU will be led by senior Niki Reams who was a NCAA Division II Kodak/WBCA All-American honoree. Reams, the Great Lakes Region and GLIAC Tournament MVP, averaged 19.0 points, 8.6 rebounds, 2.6 assists, and 2.2 steals a season ago. All-GLIAC Second Team North Division honoree junior guard

Erika Ryskamp posted 12.4 points, 3.2 rebounds, 2.5 assists, and 1.9 steals per game for GVSU last season. 2005 Russell Athletic/WBCA National Coach of the Year Dawn Plitzuweit is set to begin her fourth season at the helm of the Lakers. She has guided GVSU to a 63-28 record in her three years, including a 37-17 GLIAC mark.

Gannon University: Gannon enters the 2005-06 season with high expectations after advancing to the GLIAC title game last year for the second time in school history. *Division II Bulletin* ranked the Lady Knights 24th nationally in its preseason poll and rated Gannon as the team to beat in the GLIAC South Division. Gannon returns seven letterwinners from last year's 19-11 squad, including five players that started at least five games. The Lady Knights have qualified for eight consecutive GLIAC Tournaments. Head coach Cleve Wright enters his fourth season at Gannon, compiling a 49-36 record during the last three seasons. All-American Christina Jackson headlines Gannon's returning group. The junior forward ranked No. 1 among GLIAC players in scoring (19.4) and second in rebounding (9.8) last year. She was named to the 2004-05 WBCA All-American honorable-mention team and landed a spot on the *Division II Bulletin* 2005-06 Preseason All-American honorable-mention squad. Gannon also returns one of the GLIAC's best shooting combinations in junior Casey England (54 three-pointers in 2004-05) and sophomore Ashley Lowdermilk (36 three-pointers in 2004-05). Seniors Melanie Duncan and Beth Kraus, as well as junior Jessica Santavy and sophomore Katie Kibby, return in the post.

Hillsdale College: Expectations are very high for the Hillsdale College women's basketball team, which returns its entire roster from a year ago. Last season, the Chargers got off to a 12-0 start, and the team is hoping experience can help the team maintain that level of success throughout the season. In addition to 10 players returning from last season, talented freshmen Claire Aubrey (Birmingham Marian) and Katie Cezat (Plymouth Canton) are added to the mix. Senior Gretchen Rocco is the Chargers' only player in her class. She's joined by seven juniors who have all made substantial improvement in their games over the past two seasons. Nikki Wustman, Jodie Haines, Jenn Carlson, Crystal Yoder, Lauren Fewins, Jessie Miller and Maria Sciarini make up one of the most talented classes Hillsdale has ever seen. Sophomores Julie Slot and Katie Eckinger will also battle for playing time on this deep squad.

Lake Superior State University: The Lakers lost five players, including four-year starting point guard Randi Johnson, from last year's 22-7 team that won a fourth straight GLIAC North Division regular-season title. Candidates to fill that role for eighth-year coach Kris Dunbar include sophomores Shalyn Beauchamp and Amanda Epolito, and freshman Charity Knight. LSSU returns junior guard Monica Rehman (5-9), junior forward Mandi Johnson and senior center Becky Marquardt-King, along with sophomore Danielle Makins, who was a back-up to Marquardt-King in the

post. Marquardt-King averaged 16.2 points and 5.6 rebounds per game, and shot 64.4 percent from the field last season to earn All-GLIAC First-Team and all-region honors. Rehmann averaged 11.1 points per game, while Johnson contributed 11.2 points and 7.8 rebounds per game, and finished second in the league in steals.

Mercyhurst College: Mercyhurst, under second year head coach Karin Nichols, will try to make more strides after a seven win improvement led to an 8-19 campaign a year ago. Leading scorer and rebounder Julie Anderson returns at forward. The junior led the team with 15.6 ppg and 7.5 rpg in 2004-05 and was picked to the All-GLIAC South second team. Katlyn Petit and Cassie Seth return as starters in the backcourt. Seth averaged 10.7 ppg, third on Mercyhurst, and paced the club with 3.7 apg. Petit, meanwhile, chipped in with 8.9 ppg.

Michigan Tech University: Michigan Tech qualified for its 11th NCAA Tournament in the last 15 years in 2004-05, and third-year coach John Barnes (37-19 career record) hopes his squad can continue the string of success. The Huskies return all five starters from last year's team, which went 21-8 and lost just three GLIAC contests. Senior center Amanda Sieja (Middleton, Wis.) and sophomore point guard Sarah Stream (Ishpeming, Mich./Westwood), who were both All-GLIAC Second Team picks last year, will carry the bulk of the load in 2005-06. The 6-2 Sieja averaged a team-best 12.3 points per game to go with 5.6 rebounds a year ago. Stream scored 12.1 points per game and led the squad in assists. Hard-working junior guard Catherine Rottier (Seymour, Wis.) will again play a big role. The 5-8 Rottier notched a team-high 6.1 rebounds per contest last season and was named to the GLIAC All-Defensive Team. Sharp-shooting Jenna Bartels (La Crosse, Wis./Logan), a 6-0 junior forward, and strong defender Sarah Magee (Green Bay, Wis./Bay Port), a 5-11 senior forward, will also play a large part in the Huskies success in 2005-06. MTU is one of two teams to qualify for all 15 GLIAC Tournaments.

Northern Michigan University: The Northern Michigan University women's basketball team will be under a new leader as Troy Mattson, long-time NMU men's assistant/associate coach, has taken over the controls from Mike Geary. NMU finished the 2004-05 campaign with a 16-12 overall record and an 8-10 mark in the GLIAC. Three starters and six letterwinners are back for the 'Cats. The three top returners include Allison Carroll at forward (11.2 ppg and 5.9 rpg), guards Tera Opperman (5.9 ppg and 3.3 apg) and Maria Kasza (10.6 ppg and 4.1 rpg). NMU will miss Tiffany Grubaugh, an All-GLIAC selection for 2004-05, as she led the team last year in points with 483 (17.3 ppg), field goals (170-402) and assists (125). She also took 135 trips to the free throw line where she made 110 of her throws (.815). Carroll led the team last year with 166 rebounds which included 46 on the offensive glass. Opperman led the 'Cats with 63 steals. Kasza led the 'Cats in three-points made with 59. A couple of the new faces who could contribute include Angela Britton in the middle (5-11), Kelsey Deacon at guard (5-7) and Jacoba Williamson at forward (5-9). -30-

Williamson played at NMU where she was named the Outstanding Newcomer in 2001.

Northwood University: The Northwood women's basketball team returns nine letter winners from last years team which finished with nine victories. Northwood will feature a strong backcourt led by senior Maureen Elliott, who led the Timberwolves' in scoring (12.2 ppg) and assists (3.2 apg) last season. Junior Anna Trim is the most accurate 3-point shooter in school history (40.5 percent) and averaged 24 point per game in the Timberwolves' final three games of the 2004-05 season. Senior Devon Hillstrom ranked second on the team in rebounding (4.7 rpg) a year ago while averaging 7.1 points per game. Northwood is also expecting strong contributions from Karyn Maiorana, Brittany Stedman, Katie Gonta, Sara Bilunes, and Landree Sarata this season.

Saginaw Valley State University: The 2005-06 Saginaw Valley State women's basketball team will rely heavily upon newcomers in their quest to make the GLIAC Tournament after missing out last season. The team has four newcomers to the program that will see a lot of minutes throughout the year. Freshmen Tricia Everett (Saginaw, Mich./Swan Valley) and Brittany Collins (Detroit, Mich./Renaissance) will log heavy minutes in the backcourt for head coach Vonnie Killmer in her second season on the bench. SVSU also welcomes Bernetra Grayer (Gary, Ind./West Side) who transferred from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Grayer is a 6-2 post player who played 24 games at the Division I level last season. Sophomore Jenna Schroeder (Clio, Mich.) is a transfer from Oakland University who played in 15 games last season for the Golden Grizzlies and averaged 3.7 points per game. She had a season-high of 10 points at Illinois State on Dec. 3, 2004. The Cardinals return sophomore Kali Briggs (Jackson, Mich./Vandercook Lake) after averaging a double-double as a freshman. Briggs averaged 10.6 points and 10.3 rebounds per game and started in 17 co tests. Sophomore Kara Kinzer returns at shooting guard and fired up 171 three-pointers last season making 54 for a 31.6 percentage from the arc. Kinzer averaged nine points per game last season.

Wayne State University: WSU head coach Gloria Bradley, who returns 12 letterwinners all five starters from last season's roster that finished 6-20, is set to take the bench in her sixth season with the Warriors. Bradley, who has a 66-70 mark at Wayne State, will look to guards Shatona Clark (Detroit, Mich./Cody) and Kristen Rogers (Lansing, Mich./Everett) to lead the way. The senior duo finished 1-2 in scoring last year at 14.5 and 10.9 points per game, respectively. Clark also had a team-leading 6.9rebounds a game while recording three straight double-doubles in the later part of the season. Rogers, who has started 76 of 81 games, should move into the top five all-time on the games played list and is on pace to score her 1,000th career point this year. The Warriors begin their schedule at Great Lakes Regional foe Indianapolis on Nov. 15.