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November 7, 2006
 For immediate release

GLIAC Women's Basketball Coaches Pick Grand Valley State and Ashland To Win 2006-07 Division Titles

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 Ashland University was chosen to top the South Division.

Grand Valley State, the reigning NCAA Division II champions, received all six of the first-place votes it was eligible for and tallied 36 points. Ferris State University, which finished with 29 points in the poll, placed second, just ahead of Michigan Technological University. The Huskies received one first-place vote and finished with 26 total points. Lake Superior State University tallied 21 points and finished fourth in the poll, followed by Northwood University with 16 points. Saginaw Valley State University (11 points), and Northern Michigan University (8) rounded out the field finishing sixth and seventh in the poll, respectively.

In the South Division, Ashland garnered four of five possible first-place votes to top the poll with 24 points. Hillsdale College received one first-place nod, finishing second with 19 points. Gannon University also recorded one first-place vote, but placed third with 16 points. The University of Findlay tallied 14 points and finished fourth in the poll. Wayne State University (8 points) and Mercyhurst College (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 Ashland in the Conference Tournament finals. The 2006-07 GLIAC tournament quarterfinal games will be played on Tuesday, Feb. 27, 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 2 and Saturday, March 3.

GLIAC women's basketball teams open play on Wednesday, Nov. 15 with conference play beginning Wednesday, Nov. 29.

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2006-07 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.	Ferris State	29
3.	Michigan Tech (1)	26
4.	Lake Superior State	21
5.	Northwood	16
6.	Saginaw Valley State	11
7.	Northern Michigan	8
<i>South Division</i>		
1.	Ashland (4)	24
2.	Hillsdale (1)	19
3.	Gannon (1)	16
4.	Findlay	14
5.	Wayne State	8
6.	Mercyhurst	7

2005-06 GLIAC Women's Basketball Final Standings

<i>North Division</i>	
<i>School</i>	<i>Record (GLIAC)</i>
Grand Valley State	33-3 (17-1)
Michigan Tech	19-9 (14-4)
Lake Superior State	21-8 (12-6)
Ferris State	18-10 (12-6)
Northwood	10-16 (5-13)
Saginaw Valley State	8-19 (5-13)
Northern Michigan	6-19 (2-16)
<i>South Division</i>	
Ashland	21-11 (13-4)
Hillsdale	17-11 (10-7)
Gannon	14-15 (8-9)
Wayne State	10-17 (7-10)
Findlay	12-15 (5-12)
Mercyhurst	8-19 (4-13)

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

Ashland University: Head coach Sue Ramsey (266-265/19th season) has guided the Eagles to three consecutive seasons of 20 or more victories. Ramsey, who's 171-137 in 11 years at Ashland, directed the Eagles to a third consecutive GLIAC South Division championship last season. AU could contend for that crown again this year with four starters back. Senior guard Amber Rall (Bucyrus, OH/Wynford) averaged 17.8 ppg., a year ago and is on the verge of becoming the school's career scoring leader. The 5-7 Rall and guard Lisa Graue (Dayton, OH/Wayne), a 5-11 junior, were both named first team All-GLIAC and Graue was also a member of the league's all-defensive team. Graue averaged 9.8 ppg., last season and led the team in rebounds (7.8 rpg.), steals (74) and blocked shots (40). Inside, the Eagles can turn to 6-1 senior forward Catherine Portyrata (North Canton, OH/Hoover), who shot 60 percent from the floor while averaging 12.0 ppg., and 5.8 rpg. AU advanced to the GLIAC championship game a year ago and was invited to the NCAA Division II playoffs for the second time in school history.

Ferris State University: The Bulldogs welcome back 11 letterwinners and four starters from a year ago. FSU recorded a 18-10 overall record and made its seventh consecutive GLIAC Tournament appearance during the 2005-06 campaign. Ferris posted a third-place tying 12-6 GLIAC North Division mark last campaign. Head coach Tracey Bloodworth-Fisk enters her ninth campaign as the school's all-time winningest coach with a 135-88 (.605) ledger to date at FSU. Among the squad's top returning players is the senior backcourt combination of guards Kristin Reinhart (East Lansing) and Erin Miller (Niles). Miller, who ranks as Ferris' seventh-leading all-time scorer (1,279 points), attained All-GLIAC First Team and Daktronics All-Great Lakes Region Second Team laurels last season while averaging a squad-best 14.7 points per contest. Reinhart is a two-time second-team All-GLIAC North Division honoree, who ranked as Ferris' second-leading scorer (12.9 ppg) in 2005-06. The other returning starters include senior forward Audrey Thwing (Davison) and junior forward/center Rachel Folcik (Powers/Carney-Nadeau). Both averaged over 11 points and six rebounds a game last campaign.

University of Findlay: The Oilers are entering a new era as they embark on their first season under the guidance of Kate Cummings. Cummings comes to Findlay after a successful 11 year stint with Ohio Dominican. Last year the Oilers finished the year with a 12-15 record, missing the GLIAC Tournament for the fifth straight season. This year, Findlay's women's program will be extremely young, but talented, as they return only one senior and two juniors to their 13 player roster. Senior guard Nanette Cox returns after averaging 6.0 points and 2.3 rebounds per game as a junior. Junior centers Katie Greisiger and Megan Cable also return, making up the remainder of the Oilers upper class. Greisiger averaged 5.5 points and 3.5 rebounds per game while Cable averaged 2.7 points and 2.0 rebounds per game. Sophomore guard Brittany Wells also returns after averaging 10.8 points, 4.9 assists, 3.5 rebounds, 2.1 steals and 1.0 blocks per game as a freshman.

Grand Valley State University: Grand Valley State returns 10 letterwinners and four starters from last year's team that tallied a school best 33-3 overall record en route to the GLIAC Championship, Great Lake Region, and NCAA Division II National Championship titles. The Lakers will be led by senior guard Erika Ryskamp who averaged 11.2 points, 3.9 assists, and 3.2 rebounds and junior guard Crystal Zick who posted 13.0 points, 4.6 assists, and 3.5 rebounds last season. Senior forward Julia Braseth, the NCAA DII National Championship Most Outstanding Player, tallied 11.4 points and 6.1 rebounds per game a season ago. Grand Valley will be led by head coach Dawn Plitzuweit who has guided the Lakers to a 96-31 overall and 54-18 GLIAC mark in four seasons.

Gannon University: Experience and talent seem to be in abundance for Gannon as it looks to take a serious run at the 2006-07 GLIAC title. The Lady Knights return eight letterwinners and five players that started at least 19 games in 2005-06. All-American and GLIAC Player-of-the-Year candidate Christina Jackson headlines the returnees. The senior forward ranks among Gannon's all-time top 10 in eight categories. She has 34 career double-doubles and was the nation's 19th-leading scorer as a sophomore. Casey England joins Jackson as the only two seniors on the team. England was an All-GLIAC second-team selection last season, averaging 11.2 points and 4.3 rebounds. She ranks third all-time at Gannon with 172 career treys. Ashley Lowdermilk also averaged double digits in scoring last season, posting 11.1 points per game. The junior guard hit 57 three-pointers in 2005-06. Head coach Cleve Wright enters his fourth season at Gannon with a 63-51 record. The Lady Knights are 18-8 in the month of February with Wright at the helm.

Hillsdale College: The Hillsdale College women's basketball team returns all but one player from last year's team that went 17-11. Four starters return, led by First-Team All-GLIAC forward Nikki Wustman (Grandville, Mich.) and Second Team All-GLIAC guards Jenn Carlson (Clarkston, Mich.) and Jodie Haines (Grand Rapids, Mich.). The Chargers finished 2nd in the GLIAC South Division last year and lost to Gannon in the 2006 GLIAC Tournament Quarterfinals. A senior class of six is led by Wustman, Carlson, Haines, as well as Jessie Miller (Prescott, Mich.), Lauren Fewins (Traverse City, Mich.) and Crystal Yoder (Lakeland, Ind.) will lead Hillsdale through a tough GLIAC schedule. A talented freshman class of five is led by guard Yvonne Hamood (Dearborn, Mich./Country Day High School). Head coach Claudette Charney begins her fifth season at the Charger helm, having amassed a 68-42 record in four seasons.

Lake Superior State University: First-year head coach Jamie Pewinski takes over a Laker team that returns three regular starters and two guards who shared playing time. The Lakers will be led by All-GLIAC First Team and All-Defensive Team selection Mandi Johnson, a senior who averaged 13.3 points and 6.8 rebounds per game, and led the league in steals. They also return GLIAC Freshman of the Year Jacklyn Armstrong, who averaged 10.3 points and 4.6 rebounds per game, and senior forward Monica Rehmann, who contributed 12.7 points and 3.8 rebounds per game. Juniors Shalyn Beauchamp and Amanda Epolito split time at guard last season. LSSU finished 21-8 overall and 12-6 in the GLIAC in 2005-06. The Lakers have made five straight appearances in the NCAA Tournament. Pewinski was an assistant at LSSU for seven seasons before taking over as head coach in place of Kris Dunbar, who was promoted to director of athletics in March.

Mercyhurst College: The Lakers are coming off an 8-19 season and seek to move up the GLIAC South standings. Karin Nicholls, in her third season, has turned in a pair of eight win seasons out a squad that won just once the season before her arrival. The Lakers will benefit this season from simply having the two team leaders in points per game on the floor at the same time, something that happened just once in 2005-06. Senior forward Julie Anderson missed 10 of the first 11 contests and sophomore guard Stephanie Prischak missed the final 15 games of her freshman campaign. Anderson, who averaged 15.3 ppg and 9.1 rpg is one of just five players with 1,000 points and 500 rebounds and still has her senior season to play. She was named to the All-GLIAC South and All-GLIAC Defensive teams after the season. Prischak averaged 12.3 ppg and nearly two steals per game. Both players shot over 87 percent from the free throw line. Katlyn Petit will serve a team captain and is relied upon to provide outside shooting. Senior Priscila Nascimento started 16 as a junior transfer a year ago. Erica Elliott joins Petit as a team captain, and is a strong rebounder who has worked on her shooting in the off-season.

Michigan Tech University: After finishing third in the GLIAC North in 2004-05 and second in 2005-06, Michigan Tech looks to take the next step and win the program's eighth conference title. Fourth-year head coach John Barnes (56-28 career record) welcomes back a roster that includes All-GLIAC First Team selection Catherine Rottier (Seymour, Wis.) and 2004-05 GLIAC Freshman of the Year Sarah Stream (Ishpeming, Mich.). Rottier led the team in points (14.9 per game), rebounds (5.9 per game), assists (98) and steals (29) a year ago, and helped the Huskies to their 12th NCAA Tournament appearance in the last 16 years. Stream, a sophomore who received a medical redshirt last season, averaged 12.1 points and 2.5 assists as a freshman. Senior Jenna Bartels (La Crosse, Wis./Logan) and sophomore Alicia Schneider (Janesville, Wis.) both have starting experience. Tech also welcomes in six talented freshmen led by Katie Wysocky (Whitefish Bay, Wis.) who earned Wisconsin All-State First Team honors as a senior with averages of 21 points and 16 rebounds per game.

Northern Michigan University: Entering his second campaign with the Northern Michigan University women's basketball program is Troy Mattson. Mattson went 6-19 overall and 2-16 in the GLIAC in his inaugural campaign. NMU has four of the five starters returning. Allison Carroll (F, 6-0, Jr.) leads the way as she averaged 14.0 ppg and 4.5 rpg for the 2005-06 season. Maria Kasza (G, 5-6, Jr.) averaged almost 12 ppg (11.6) and 4.4 rpg.

Northwood University: The Northwood University women's basketball team has high expectations after winning 10 games last year for the first time since the 1991-92 season. The Timberwolves return three starters and seven letterwinners from last year's unit. Senior guard Sara Bilunes ranked eighth nationally in 3-point field goal percentage (42.8) and averaged 17.4 points per game over Northwood's final 11 contests. Fellow seniors Brittany Stedman, Karyn Maiorana and Danielle Lapeer should see significant time this season as well. NU also features a pair of athletic forwards in Katie Gonta and Megan Starnes. Junior Lisa Collison and sophomore Sarah Glowacki are a pair of talented transfers who were forced to sit out last season that will provide immediate assistance for third-year head coach Jeff Curtis.

Saginaw Valley State University: The Cardinal women's basketball program is looking to return to the once-prestigious tradition established over 30 years ago. Head Coach Vonnie Killmer, who is entering her third year at the helm of the women's basketball program, returns all five starters and eight letterwinners from last season. Junior Kara Kinzer (Shelby Twp., Mich./Utica Eisenhower) is the leading outside scoring threat for the Cardinals. She ranked fifth in the GLIAC in three-pointers made per game (2.04) and enters the season with 109 career triples which ranks fourth all-time at SVSU. Junior Jenna Schroeder (Clio, Mich.) enjoyed a breakthrough season after transferring from Oakland University. Schroeder ranked in the top 10 in the conference in five different categories including scoring (15.4 ppg), assists (5.04), steals (2.19), minutes (34.56) and assist-to-turnover ratio (1.48) as a sophomore. Junior Kali Briggs (Jackson, Mich./Vandercook Lake) has led the GLIAC in rebounding for the first two years of her career. Last year she averaged 9.4 boards per contest and also led the league in offensive boards per game. Briggs ranked third in the league in field goal percentage (.577) as a sophomore.

Wayne State University: The Wayne State University women's basketball squad enters the 2006-07 campaign with 10 returning letterwinners from a team that improved four games last year from the 2004-05 season. Head coach Gloria Bradley (76-87 at WSU, 190-156 overall), who begins her seventh year as WSU's head coach and 14th as a collegiate head coach, is excited about the potential of this year's squad. The Warriors return their top scorer from a year ago in Cherita Smith, who was second in the GLIAC in steals (2.52 per game), 11th in blocks and 12th in scoring (13.1 ppg). Sophomore Chastidy Miller was second on the squad in total rebounds (102) and third in points (237).