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 For Immediate Release

GLIAC Softball Coaches Pick Wayne State To Win 2007 Crown

Ashland & Gannon Edge Out Grand Valley State To Tie For Second Place

BAY CITY, Mich. -- The head softball coaches of the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) chose Wayne State University to win the league's 2007 championship in preseason balloting.

The Warriors, the conference's defending champions, claimed eight of 10 possible first-place votes and 97 total points. Wayne State tied for the best regular season record in the GLIAC in 2006, posting a 15-5 mark.

Ashland University and Gannon University tied for second in the poll after each team recorded 80 points. The Eagles claimed two first-place nods while the Golden Knights earned the lone remaining first place vote.

Grand Valley State University landed in fourth place with 78 points, 11 points ahead of Ferris State University (67). Northwood University placed sixth with 55 points, while Saginaw Valley State University finished just four points higher than Hillsdale College (47-43), placing seventh and eighth, respectively

Mercyhurst College and the University of Findlay tied for ninth place with 23 points. Lake Superior State University rounds out the poll with 11 points.

The league's 11 head softball coaches ranked each of the GLIAC teams, but were not allowed to rank their own squad. The first-place team on each ballot received ten points, while the second-place team received nine points, etc.

The 2007 GLIAC softball tournament will be held at the Emerson Park Softball Complex in Midland, Mich. The eight-team double elimination event will take place on Friday, May 4 and Saturday, May 5.

GLIAC softball teams open the 2007 conference season on Wednesday, Mar. 28.

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2007 GLIAC Preseason Softball Coaches Poll		
Rank	School (first-place votes)	Points
1.	Wayne State (8)	97
2.	Ashland (2)	80
	Gannon (1)	80
4.	Grand Valley State	78
5.	Ferris State	67
6.	Northwood	55
7.	Saginaw Valley State	47
8.	Hillsdale	43
9.	Mercyhurst	23
	Findlay	23
11.	Lake Superior State	11

2006 GLIAC Softball Final Standings*		
Place	School	GLIAC (Overall)
1.	Wayne State \$	15-5 (32-26)
2.	Grand Valley State %	12-8 (35-21)
3.	Gannon	14-6 (41-18)
4.	Northwood	15-5 (37-15)
5.	Ashland	14-6 (35-21)
6.	Hillsdale	10-10 (25-24)
t-7.	Ferris State	10-10 (26-26)
t-7.	Saginaw Valley State	10-10 (22-32)
t-9.	Mercyhurst	5-15 (17-30)
t-9.	Findlay	5-15 (14-38)
11.	Lake Superior State	0-20 (10-36)

* - GLIAC Softball final standings are based on the average of regular season and tournament finishes.
 \$ - GLIAC Champion.
 % - GLIAC Tournament Champion.

The following are season previews on each of the GLIAC's 11 Softball Teams:

Ashland University: Hopes are high for the Eagles, who return eight starters from a team that was 35-21, 14-6 in GLIAC action. Senior outfielder Bree Beabout has been an All-GLIAC selection for three consecutive seasons. She hit a team-high .374 last year. Sophomore catcher Ashley Evans hit .323 with five homers and 26 RBI last year when she was the GLIAC freshman of the year. Shortstop Jill Allering was the Eagles' best run producer – she hit .365 with six homers and knocked in a team-leading 33 RBI. Another establisher hitter is designated player Kelli Williams, who hit .299 and belted seven homers last season. Those numbers earned her first team All-GLIAC laurels.

The pitching staff will be built around senior Jaime Williams, who was 23-11 with a 1.68 ERA and 276 strikeouts in 225 innings. Williams was a second team all-conference choice in 2006. Junior Jennifer Alderson was 8-4 last season and will see action in the circle again this season. Head coach Sheilah Gulas is in her 11th season at Ashland where she's 364-169. Overall in 21 years, she's 567-293. Gulas and AU will serve as the hosts for this year's NCAA Division II National Championships, which will be held in May at Akron's Firestone Stadium.

Ferris State University: Youth and talent are among the preseason themes applicable to the 2007 Ferris State softball team. The Bulldogs, under 10th-year head coach Keri Becker, return the bulk of last season's 26-26 team although two-time (2005-06) All-GLIAC First-Teamer and 2005 GLIAC Player of the Year in outfielder Emily McLean isn't among them. FSU will also have nine newcomers added into the mix. Becker, who's the program's all-time winningest coach with a 282-192-1 career mark and presently ranks 59th nationally in career victories, expects to have a versatile team which can be interchangeable both offensively and defensively.

Senior first baseman Laura Crower (.243, 3 HR, 23 RBI), a 2005 second-team All-GLIAC pick, and junior third baseman Katie Kraai (.220, 1 HR, 16 RBI) will anchor the infield on the corners. A key to Ferris' success this season will be in the pitching circle as three of last year's four hurlers return. A pair of sophomores, Sarah Mueller (12-12, 2.09 ERA, 147.2 IP) and Amanda Jager (5-11, 3.54 ERA, 93.0 IP) will lead the way. Mueller (.270, 1 HR, 14 RBI) and Jager (.301, 3 HR, 11 RBI) have also proven to effective with the bat.

University of Findlay: The University of Findlay Oilers will be guided by fifth-year head coach Ron Ammons, with a record of 55-123. Last season, UF tied for ninth place in the GLIAC with a record of 5-15. Findlay's hopes rest largely on the right arm of senior Michele Jordan (9-14 in 2006) who will lead the staff for the third year. The only other senior, Nicole Wagner, moves from center field to left.

The Oilers hope that the 10 freshmen who predominated last season's roster will show their experience. First baseman Jeanne Hilvers was UF's second-leading hitter with a .312 batting average including 49 hits and 16 RBI's, plus a school record 325 putouts. Catcher Audrey Semanco batted .277 with 19 RBI's and threw out 14 runners in conference play. Seven more freshmen have joined Findlay's current roster, so the Oilers will again rely on young players.

Gannon University: Gannon enters the 2007 season with high expectations after a fabulous 2006 campaign. The Lady Knights, ranked 16th in the NFCA Division II Preseason Poll, return 13 letterwinners from last year's 41-18 squad that advanced to the NCAA Division II Tournament for the second consecutive season and third time in school history. The Lady Knights finished third overall in the GLIAC and third at the GLIAC Postseason Tournament. Seven position players who started at least 28 games last season and all four pitchers return in 2007. Head coach Beth Pierce owns a .664 career winning percentage (200-101-1) during six seasons at Gannon, ranking 35th among active NCAA Division II coaches.

Jaclyn Corroto is Gannon's top returning hitter. The junior shortstop hit .365 with 48 runs, 42 RBI, 14 doubles, nine home runs, and 14 stolen bases last season. Jenn Kulick (Jr, LHP) and Lauren Soldner (Sr, RHP) are Gannon's top returning pitchers. Kulick was 15-7 with a 2.32 ERA and 108 strikeouts in 23 starts last season. Soldner finished 21-11 with a 2.45 ERA and 190 strikeouts in 31 starts.

Grand Valley State University: Grand Valley State won six straight games to capture the 2006 GLIAC Tournament title en route to its seventh Great Lakes Region Tournament appearance in eight years. The Lakers finished the season with a 35-21 overall and 12-8 GLIAC record. All-GLIAC First Team honoree, junior shortstop Kristin Moleski, led the Lakers last season with a .341 batting average, posting nine double, three triples, five home runs. Sophomore pitcher Lori Andjelich had a 16-12 record with 1.59 ERA. She tallied 196 strikeouts in 185 inning of action. Junior pitcher Stephanie Cole tallied a 17-4 record with a 1.80 ERA and 73 strikeouts.

GVSU returns 11 letterwinners and six starters from last year's squad. This year's squad is compiled of just one senior, four juniors, five sophomores, and eight freshmen. The young team is led by veteran head coach Doug Woods, who is beginning his 17th season as the head softball coach at Grand Valley State. He has the longest tenure of any Laker softball coach and during his time he has compiled an overall record of 609-267-3 (.695).

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Hillsdale College: First-year head coach Beck Martinez will inherit one of the GLIAC's most experienced softball teams in 2007, and she takes over the Hillsdale College program. Martinez, who previously was an assistant coach at Siena Heights, takes the reins of a Hillsdale team that went 25-24 last season, and returns eight of nine starters this year.

Junior pitcher Aimee Genter set the single-season strikeout record in 2006 with 199 K's. She will be joined on the pitching staff by senior Amy Whaley and sophomore Jamie Vandenburg. The lineup should be strong from top to bottom, starting with Second-Team All-GLIAC shortstop Jamie Meyers, who had 64 hits and batted .390 last season. Catcher Ashley Wolff was a First-Team All-GLIAC pick in 2005 and will enter her third year as the starter. Juniors Brecken Libbe and Katie Botsis each hammered 15 doubles last season, and Botsis drove in a team-high 30 runs.

Lake Superior State University: Lake Superior State will be led by senior pitcher/third baseman Lisa Dahm, junior pitcher Stephanie Reveley and sophomore outfielder Nikki Christensen. Dahm finished second for the Lakers in strikeouts in 2006 with 83 and led the team in hitting at .269. Christensen finished second in hitting with a .250 average. Both players received All-Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Honorable Mention last season.

Leadership will also come from four-year starting shortstop Erin Retherford and senior catcher Ashley Yarrington, and transfer students April Brandt and Rachel Hall. The pitching staff will also include sophomore Helena Zandarski. LSSU coach Don Myers is in his 18th season. The Lakers finished 10-36 overall and 0-20 in the GLIAC in 2006.

Mercyhurst College: The Mercyhurst softball team returns seven starters and three pitchers looking to improve on a 17-30 record from a year ago. After going 5-15 in the GLIAC last year, Mercyhurst returns most of its squad, including 12 letterwinners under fourth year head coach Sara Headley (53-74-1 in three seasons).

Catcher Kim Griffin is one of four senior starters in the lineup and hit a team-best .322 a year ago with 22 RBI. A two-time second team All-GLIAC performer, senior Jen Feret anchors the pitching staff a year after posting a 2.50 ERA and 129 strikeouts in 145 1/3 innings. Feret also plays first base and hit .309 with a team-high four homers last year.

Northwood University: The Northwood softball team returns all but one if its position players from last year's 37-15 team that claimed a share of its second straight GLIAC regular season title. The Timberwolves will feature First Team All-GLIAC third baseman Sam Thacker, who hit .368 a year ago while slugging .507. Fellow All-GLIAC honorees Korey Schluckbier, Rachel Minikel and Reeta Echevarria also return as does 2005 GLIAC Freshman of the Year Julie Olson.

Northwood did lose First Team All-Region pitcher Lisa Shepard, but returns sophomore Sheena Smith, who finished third in the GLIAC in strikeouts per game last season (8.40). NU also features a pair of upper classmen with experience in the circle with Carly Laxton and Schlucker to go along with talented freshman Jessica Wojcik. Northwood will be under the guidance of first-year head coach in Meaggan Pettipiece, who comes to NU after highly successful playing and coaching stints at California (Pa.).

Saginaw Valley State University: Interim head coach Bill Graham takes the helm of a team that was 22-32 (10-10 GLIAC) last season and tied for 7th place in the conference. Graham has spent three years as an assistant coach at SVSU and during that time the Cardinals have compiled a record of 68-71-1 (31-27).

The Cards return some of their top players this season, both on the mound and at the plate. Sophomore Stacy Kraatz (Howell, Mich./Hartland) comes into the season with a full year of experience under her belt. Kraatz went 5-10 in her first season of collegiate softball, recording an earned-run average of 2.70 and racking up 94 strike outs, while giving up only 18 walks. At the plate, Kraatz was equally impressive. She led the team with a .319 batting average, a .500 slugging percentage and six homeruns. Her 20 RBIs ranked her third on the team. Sophomore Jessica Anhel (Oxford, Mich.) is another player who should continue to improve with a year of experience. In her first year at Saginaw Valley, Anhel hit .305 and knocked out five home runs. Her batting average, home run total and .482 slugging percentage are all second on the team to Kraatz.

Wayne State University: The 2007 Wayne State University softball team has 11 returning letterwinners from a squad that won the GLIAC championship and participated in the NCAA tournament in 2006. The return of six starters and two pitchers gives head coach Gary Bryce hopes of a successful 26th season. Last season, the Warriors finished 32-26 overall while playing one of the toughest schedules in the country. Bryce, the GLIAC's longest tenured softball coach, has posted an 809-526-6 mark in his 25 seasons at the Wayne State helm.

The Warriors will be led by senior catcher Sarah Kish, who batted .326 a year ago with a .448 on-base percentage. Defensively, she threw out 14-of-24 opposing base stealers, which led the league. Senior pitcher Sarah Ytsma will anchor the WSU pitching staff. Ytsma posted 10-7 mark last season with a 3.00 earned run average, 45 strikeouts and one shutout.