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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Women, men advance to post-season basketball play

Summary: Both the Cougar women's and men's basketball teams will make a trip to the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference post-season tournament this week.

(February 20, 2008)-Both the Cougar women's and men's basketball teams will make a trip to the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference (UMAC) post-season tournament this week.

The women's basketball team defeated Presentation College, 66-61, Tuesday night. The win puts the Cougars into the 2008 UMAC post-season tournament for the third straight year.

The UMM women's team are the number three seed and will take on Northland College, the number two seed, at 2 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22, at Northwestern College in St. Paul.

The Cougars finished the regular season 15-10 overall and 9-5 (third) in the UMAC. The 2007-08 season marks the third straight year the Cougar women's team has had a winning season. UMM is 46-32 overall the past three years and 29-8 in conference play.

Last year the Cougars won their first ever post-season tournament game with an 86-73 win over Bethany Lutheran College but lost to Presentation College 82-73 in the title game.

Senior Alaina Benson (Clinton, Minn.) is the team's leading scorer averaging 15.3 ppg., third in the league. She also became just the 17th player in Cougar women's basketball history to reach the 1,000-point mark in her career. Heading into the tournament, Benson has 1,055 points, moving her into 15th on the all-time scoring list.

Tynell Kocer (Jr. Pierre, S.D.) averages 14.9 ppg., fourth in the UMAC and Marissa Maynard (Sr. Blaine, Minn.) adds 10.9 ppg.

As a team, UMM leads the UMAC in field goal percentage, three-point field goal percentage, assists, steals and turn over margin. The Cougars are second in scoring offense and free-throw percentage.

UMM and Northland College will meet for the second time in six days this Friday. The Lumberjills defeated the Cougars 71-66 at the UMM P.E. Center on February 16. Earlier this year, Northland handed UMM a 66-53 loss in Ashland, Wis.

Number one seed Northwestern College will take on Presentation College, the number four seed, at 6 p.m. Friday. The championship game is set for 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23.

After a one-year absence, the men's basketball team will make a return trip to the UMAC post-season tournament.

The 2008 tournament will have a different look to it than year's past, however, as a play-in game was added this year, so five teams advanced to the 2008 tournament. After Tuesday's regular season came to an end for all eight teams, four teams had finished the year with identical 9-5 league records: UMM, Bethany Lutheran, Martin Luther and St. Scholastica. Northwestern College was the No. 1 team finishing with a 12-2 conference record.

Martin Luther earned the number two seed by virtue of the conference tie-breaking system. A coin toss was done to determine the number three seed, St. Scholastica.

UMM will meet Bethany Lutheran at 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21, Northwestern College. The winner of that game will meet Northwestern at 8 p.m. Friday. Martin Luther and St. Scholastica will play at 4 p.m. Friday.

The Cougar men's team has been in the UMAC post-season tournament in three of the past four seasons, including 2004-05, the year in which the Cougars finished 19-8 overall and 11-3 in the conference (second) and advanced to win the post season championship.

The men's team concluded regular season play Tuesday with a thrilling 65-60 come from behind win in overtime over Presentation College. UMM finished the regular season 14-11 overall and 9-5 in the UMAC.

Phil Allen (Jr. Clarissa, Minn.) leads UMM and the UMAC in scoring averaging at 18.1 ppg. He has 836 points in his career and will have a chance to put his name on the Cougar men's 1,000 point career scoring leader board next year.

Will Jenson (Sr. Eau Claire, Wis.) adds 15.6 ppg and Eric Dalbey (So., Mora, Minn.) is the third Cougar averaging in double figures at 14.8 ppg.

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