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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

New look to UMAC football in 2008

Summary: UMM is among four affiliate members admitted to the St. Louis Intercollegiate Conference (SLIAC) beginning in 2008. The other schools playing football in the conference will be: Crown College, Martin Luther College and Northwestern College, all in Minn.

(July 14, 2006)-Four affiliate members have been admitted to the St. Louis Intercollegiate Conference (SLIAC) and will begin play in the conference for the 2008 football season. The four schools, which will only play football in the conference, are Crown College (Minn.), Martin Luther College (Minn.), the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM) and Northwestern College (Minn.). They will join current SLIAC members Blackburn, Greenville, MacMurray, Principia, Westminster and Eureka, which becomes a conference member August 1, 2006, as football playing members of the SLIAC. The first conference championship will be contested in 2008 and the conference will become eligible for an Automatic Qualifier to the NCAA Division III Tournament in 2010.

"This transition is really no big deal for UMM," said UMM Head Football Coach Ken Crandall. "We are playing seven of these 10 teams in our current Upper Midwest Athletic Conference (UMAC) structure. This is basically a name change in football only for our UMAC competitors and competition schedule beginning in 2008."

Crown, Martin Luther, UMM and Northwestern are currently members of the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference and will continue that affiliation in every sport except football. Blackburn, Principia and Westminster have been affiliate members of the UMAC in football. Eureka, Greenville and MacMurray have been in the Illinis-Badger Conference, a football-only conference that will disband after the 2007 season.

Crandall continued, "We will continue to have our traditional UMAC North Division rivalries with Northwestern, Martin Luther and Crown College when this change goes into effect in Fall 2008. We won't be adding additional travel to the Cougar schedule." The ten schools will be divided into two divisions with Principia joining the four Minnesota schools in the North Division and the other five playing in the South Division. The teams in each division will play each other every season, and there will be two games, one at home and one on the road, with teams in the other division on a rotating basis. The winners of the two divisions will meet for the conference championship each year.

The game for the conference championship between the winners of each division will be played as part of a five game day at the Metrodome in Minneapolis when the second, third, fourth and fifth place teams in each division will also play one another. The UMAC has conducted this "Dome Day" the past four years. Plans are being made to play in Minneapolis and St. Louis in alternating years.

In making the announcement, Rich Meckfessel, commissioner of the SLIAC, said, "The four Minnesota schools are very much like our schools in size, character, mission and athletic philosophy. This is a great step forward for our conference, especially in giving the more than 300 football student athletes at our schools the opportunity to compete for a conference championship and a berth in the NCAA playoffs. Even the four SLIAC schools that do not play football are enthusiastic about this".

Crandall said, "We're building the UMM football program to ensure that the Cougars are strong competitors in 2010 when the conference receives an automatic bid into the NCAA Division III football playoffs."

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