2006

Panther Tennis 2005-06 Media Guide

University of Northern Iowa

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
PANTHER TENNIS
CATCH A RISING STAR
2005-06 MEDIA GUIDE
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* Missouri Valley Conference Match

All Times Central
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QUICK FACTS
Location: Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0314
Founded: 1876
Enrollment: 12,513
Nickname: Panthers
President: Dr. Robert Koob
Dir. of Athletics: Rick Hartzell
NCAA Faculty Representative: Anne Woodrick
Head Coach: Sachin Kirtane
(4th Season; 29-27, 8-19)
Kirtane’s Email: sachin.kirtane@uni.edu
Kirtane’s Office Phone: 319-273-3901
Conference: Missouri Valley (NCAA I)
Home Facility: Black Hawk Tennis Center and
UNI Tennis Courts
Tennis SID Contact: Luke Buhrow

The UNI Athletics Media Relations Office always
is interested in working with the media to promote
Panther Athletics. To set up an interview with any UNI
administrator, coach, or student-athlete, call (319) 273-
3642.

Complete results for each home meet will be made
available as soon as possible following the conclusion
of the meet on UNI’s athletics website at

Credits
The 2005-06 Tennis Media Guide & cover was written and designed
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2005-06 SEASON PREVIEW

Cats set to finish comeback story
One win shy of NCAA Tournament, Kirtane’s team focuses on one goal

With last season’s great achievements in the rear-view mirror, the Panthers look to build on their experiences from the 2004-05 campaign to reach even new heights this season with one goal in mind -- a Missouri Valley Conference championship.

Beginning his fourth year as head coach, Sachin Kirtane believes this team can do just as much, if not more, than last season’s team.

“It was incredible. It was the best season we’ve had in the history of the program,” Kirtane said.

UNI begins the 2006 spring campaign with high expectations after going to its first Valley championship in history, coming one win shy of an automatic berth in the NCAA tournament.

Sophomore Carolina Hannes will look to build on her 26-5 freshman campaign.

Immediately following the loss to Illinois State that ended the season, Kirtane started planning for this year.

“We are now one of the elite. Our goal is to win the Valley...second is no longer good enough.”

On the way to making it to the championship, the two wins against Wichita State and Drake were secured by two freshmen, Carolina Hannes and Meghana Paritala.

Five of the six singles starters return for another run at the title. Returning as the number one player is Paritala, who went 19-4 in singles in her first year on the team. For her efforts, she was named to the MVC All-Select team.

Paritala ranks fourth at UNI in single season singles wins and second in singles career winning percentage. That bodes well for the future.

“She has the chance to be the best player in UNI history,” Kirtane said of Paritala. “She has a huge forehand that is very special.”

With no new players, unity and experience are this team’s major strengths. Kirtane said the women are friends off the court which leads to success on the court.

In addition, the Panthers learned the value of every point last season.

“They always play until the last point and they just need to go out and do the same things this season if we’re going to be successful,” Kirtane said.

With almost every player returning and no freshmen, inexperience is no longer an excuse. The players know what to expect with classes and Valley tennis.

“It’s going to be close again this year so we just have to keep fighting,” Kirtane said.

The team lost only one player, Jaime Noyce, to graduation. “We’re going to miss Jaime’s leadership more than her tennis,” Kirtane said.

“It was her intangibles but the girls will always have her as an example.”

The fall 2005 season got off to a slow start at the Lloyd Stokstad Invitational, but Paritala forged her way to the finals before losing to Jill Palen of Iowa State.

The next weekend the Panthers traveled to the Omaha Collegiate Championships where Paritala finished what she had started the previous weekend, winning the flight championship against Ashley Morris of Bradley.

Meredith Esbeck, who Kirtane said is looking for another big year, also won a championship at Omaha, against fellow teammate Sara Kendall.

The final fall weekend was the Valley individual
championships, but the Cats were down one player, with Mariana Muraca sidelined with an illness. Even with the major change in the lineup, Kirtane was pleased with the effort from the team.

"Overall, I'm satisfied with the way the girls played. But I hope they see we still have more work we need to do," he said.

Hannes placed fifth at the championships, defeating Veronika Laszayova of Drake in a tight match.

Overall, the fall season was what Kirtane was looking for. He saw some improvement from last spring. The Panthers had some tough matches and competed hard against other Valley opponents.

UNI enters this season with untold amounts of confidence after turning around a losing program and almost making it to the pinnacle of college athletics. Kirtane and the women plan to use their winning season as a motivator to achieve their goal of winning the Valley title.

The Panthers will face all the Valley teams, in addition to two unfamiliar opponents. February 26 will bring South Dakota State to Cedar Falls for the first time since the 1983-84 campaign. The Panthers are 3-0 all-time against the Jackrabbits. Facing each other for the first time in history, Austin Peay and the Panthers will play on March 14 in Nashville, Tenn.

Also returning to the Panther schedule is the University of Illinois-Chicago, which the Panthers have a 6-1 record against and haven't seen since the 2000-01 season.

Meeting the Panthers for only the second time in history will be Western Illinois. Their only previous meeting was during the 1997-98 season, a 7-2 Panther win played in Cedar Falls.

"I know we can compete with everyone in the Valley. We're strong at every position but we also can't take things for granted," Kirtane said.

Samantha Schnabel, a returning sophomore from Ontario, said, "I think we have shown that UNI isn't going anywhere; we're here to win and I know we can do it."

Her teammates agree. "We did a great job last year and I'm very happy with that, but it wasn't enough," Hannes said.

After breaking through the Valley and seeing a glimpse of what the top looks like, the Panthers will look to ace the competition this season.

The Panthers changed UNI history with their 19-4 season.
Sachin Kirtane begins his fourth season as UNI's women's tennis coach, which moves him into a tie for third in victories on the all-time coaching tenure list for women's tennis. In his first three seasons at the helm, he has turned the program around, going 19-4 last year to move to 29-27 as the head coach.

Kirtane already ranks third in career winning percentage and still dreams of taking the program to higher ground.

In only his third season at the helm, Kirtane led the Panthers to their first Missouri Valley Conference championship match only to lose to regular season champion Illinois State.

His second season saw the team achieve the goal he had set forth of simply to, "get better." The team, while boasting only one senior, went 7-12 overall, including 1-8 in the MVC.

From 1998-2002, Kirtane was the assistant men's and women's tennis coach at Valdosta State University. He helped lead both teams to the finals of the Gulf South Conference Championships in 1998-99. In 2000, the men's team was ranked fourth in the nation. The women's team won the conference title and reached the semi-finals of the NCAA Division II Championship in Pensacola, FL. In 2001, the men's team was ranked second in the nation and won its second consecutive conference title.

Kirtane graduated from VSU in 1998 with a Marketing degree. In 2000, he earned his masters from VSU in Business Administration.

Kirtane was an athlete for VSU's tennis team from 1994-98. He was awarded all-conference and all-American honors. He also was a member of the Student Advisory Committee. He participated in the Division II National Tournament and won the Gulf South Conference championship in 1995. He was named the team's Most Valuable Player in 1996. Kirtane was a member of the team that finished fourth in the national tournament in 1994-95. In 1992-93, he played professionally. He also played in the ITF International Junior Ranking Tournaments in 1990-91. In the fall of 2004, he was inducted into the Valdosta Hall of Fame for his efforts on the court and his contribution to the game.
THE TEAM
PLAYER BIOS

Meredith Esbeck

2004-05: Placed second at the MVC Individual Championships...played mostly at the No. 6 singles spot in the spring, ending with a 18-2 record, 19-2 overall...named All-MVC first team.

2003-04: Finished her first collegiate season with a 6-12 record at No. 3 & 4 singles and a 7-13 doubles record...showed great improvement throughout the season.

High School: Finished seventh in state junior year and second in doubles senior year...was a two-year district champion...senior year, was mixed doubles champion.

Personal: Favorite book is "She's Come Undone"...favorite movie is the "Thomas Crown Affair"...favorite actor is Ben Stiller...majoring in Psychology...plans to become a lawyer...enjoys hanging out with friends...most admires her mother...daughter of Mark and Jane Esbeck

Bonus Stat: Currently holds UNI's 13th best career singles winning percentage (.596).

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<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
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</table>

Sara Kendall

2004-05: Played primarily doubles with departed senior Jaime Noyce, finishing 19-4...was an honorable mention MVC Scholar Athlete.

2003-04: Set out the season because of NCAA transfer rules.

High School: High school team was ranked third nationally...earned letters in cross country, tennis, track and netball.

Personal: Enjoys painting, reading, going to the gym and hanging out with friends...favorite actor is Kevin Spacy...favorite movie is "Two Hands"...most admires her mother because she always has been very supportive...best memory in sports is traveling...majoring in art education...daughter of William and Meredith Kendall

Bonus Stat: Is first all-time in UNI career doubles winning percentage (.800).

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Carolina Hannes

2004-05: Played mostly at the No. 5 singles position, finishing 19-3 overall... teamed with Agnese Pukse in doubles, going 16-4...recorded the clinching victory in the quarterfinals of the MVC Tournament against Wichita State.

Personal: Favorite movie is "Shrek"...favorite actor is Ashton Kutcher...favorite tennis players are Leyton Hewitt and Rafael Nadal...says her parents are her biggest influence...major is physical education...believes "we have to work hard to achieve our goals"...parents are Roland and Roseli Hannes

Bonus Stat: Is second all-time in UNI single season singles winning percentage (.839) and first all-time in career singles winning percentage (.857).

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</table>

Samantha Schnobel

Meredith Esbeck: "She hits the ball as well as anyone I've seen. She's looking for another big year."

Carolina Hannes: "She attacks, likes to come in and has great volleys. Her forehand can be devastating."

Sara Kendall: "Sara is our best doubles player. She works very hard and has the talent to be in the singles lineup."

Mariana Muraca: "She's a good doubles player who knows how to win points. She's going to be a leader on this team."

Meghana Paritala: "She has a chance to be the best player in UNI history. She has a huge forehand that is very special."

Agnese Pukse: "She uses her forehand and serve well and has big weapons."

Samantha Schnobel: "Samantha has a lot of talent and hits the ball harder than anyone."
MARIANA MURACA

2004-05: Placed second at the MVC Individual Championships...played primarily at the No. 4 singles position, ending with a 17-4 record, 18-4 overall...went 15-8 in doubles...was an honorable mention MVC Scholar Athlete.

2003-04: Compiled an overall record of 11-7 at No. 3-6 singles and finished 5-12 in doubles...was named Missouri Valley Conference Athlete of the Week after a successful weekend against Western Illinois where at No. 4 singles, she won 6-1, 6-1 and at No. 1 doubles, helped post an 8-4 win.

Personal: Favorite movie is "Men of Honor"...majoring in physical education with a minor in coaching...favorite actors/actress are Bruce Willis and Julia Roberts...favorite professional sports team is Sao Paulo Futebol Clube...enjoys hanging out with friends, shopping and playing soccer...chose UNI because of the tennis program and the coach...most admires her mother for her support...daughter of Luiz and Stella Cobra Muraca.

Bonus Stat: Her 26 singles wins during the 2004-05 season placed her sixth all-time in single season singles wins.

Muraca’s Career Record

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MEGHAHNA PARITALA

2004-05: Went 19-4 at the No. 1 singles position...had a 15-8 doubles record...was the clinching match against Drake at the MVC Championships...named to the All-MVC Select Team.

Personal: Favorite movies are the "Fast and the Furious," "How to Lose a Guy in Ten Days," and "The Notebook"...favorite athletes are Mario Ancic, Andy Roddick and Lleyton Hewitt...enjoys spending time with friends and listening to music...favorite actors are Paul Walker, Ben Affleck and Vin Diesel...majoring in business and marketing and minoring in Russian...says best aspect of being an athlete at UNI is being part of the team...daughter of Martins and Iveta Paritala.

Bonus Stat: Ranks second in career singles winning percentage (.824) behind teammate Carolina Hannes (.839).

Paritala’s Career Record

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AGNESE PUKSE

2004-05: Played No. 2 singles, going 10-11...teamied with Carolina Hannes in doubles, finishing 16-4...named honorable mention MVC Scholar Athlete.

2003-04: Competed at No. 2 singles all season and posted a 5-14 record, 7-11 in doubles.

Personal: Favorite movies are the "Fast and the Furious," "How to Lose a Guy in Ten Days," and "The Notebook"...favorite actors are Mario Ancic, Andy Roddick and Lleyton Hewitt...enjoys spending time with friends and listening to music...favorite actors are Paul Walker, Ben Affleck and Vin Diesel...majoring in business and marketing and minoring in Russian...says best aspect of being an athlete at UNI is being part of the team...daughter of Martins and Iveta Pukse.

Bonus Stat: Started the spring season with a seven-match winning streak in doubles.

Pukse’s Career Record

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<td>9-9</td>
<td>24-14</td>
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SAMANTHA SCHNOBEL

2004-05: Went 2-0 during the spring season, with a win in both singles and doubles.

Personal: Favorite movie is "The Phantom of the Opera"...hobbies include reading, hiking, sailing, swimming, and being with friends...favorite book is "Timeline"...looks up to her younger sister because she has taught her about the kind of person she wants to be...loves music by Coldplay...majoring in History...daughter of Andy and Sarah Schnobel.

Bonus Stat: Both wins came against the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Schnobel’s Career Record

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Panthers Finish Best Season in 20 Years

After being picked to finish eighth in the Valley, Panthers come one win shy of NCAA Tournament

Expectations weren't high at the start of the 2004-05 season after two straight losing campaigns, a team that had only one senior, and three freshmen to boot.

But right from the start, the Panthers and head coach Sachin Kirtane showed that the season would be like no other. The Panthers competed in three tournaments, improving their standing in each event. Sophomore Mariana Muraca, who in the previous spring season had posted an 11-7 singles record, improved to 8-3 in the fall, solidifying the number four position.

Freshman Meghana Paritala started and ended the season as the Cats' number one player. She placed first in her bracket at the Creighton Invitational, finishing the fall season with a 9-2 singles record.

In the Missouri Valley Conference Individual Championships, sophomore Meredith Esbeck placed second at the sixth position, earning All-MVC recognition.

Picked to finish eighth in the preseason coaches poll, the Panthers got off to a scorching start, going 7-0 to start the season.

"We had an incredible year," Kirtane said. "We had probably the best season in the history of Panther tennis."

The Panthers went 6-3 in the MVC, their first loss of the season coming against Drake 4-3. By the time the Panthers faced their next conference opponent, they already were 11-1 overall and at the top of the league.

Losses to Illinois State and Indiana State, both 5-2, sent the Panthers to 1-3 in the MVC. But the team didn't stop fighting. "Our team never gives up," Kirtane said.

The perseverance helped UNI finish the regular season on a six-match winning streak, including wins against Southern Illinois, Wichita State and Iowa State. Their 17-3 overall record, 6-3 in the MVC, earned the Panthers the fourth seed at the conference tournament. Keeping with the regular season, the matches were close and hard-fought on both sides.

The first round saw the Panthers face Wichita State, a team they had beaten 6-1 in the regular season. But mistakes mounted and the match was tied 3-3 with freshman Carolina Hannes winning the last match to secure the win.

Next up for the Panthers was Drake, a team they lost to 4-3 in the regular season. Just like the previous day, the Panthers were tied 3-3 with a different freshman, Paritala, needing to win. She did and sent the team and the school to its first ever MVC women's tennis championship match.

The ride would end there for the Cats. They were defeated by two-time conference champion Illinois State, which earned its third straight trip to the NCAA tournament.

"They (Illinois State) were just better and my hats off to them," Kirtane said. In the same breath, he said, "Wait until next year."
**Panther Records**

### Singles Season Wins – Singles

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### Single Season Winning Percentage – Singles (10 matches)

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### University Record:

- Singles: 279-335 (.455)
- Doubles: 241-289 (.455)

---

**Panther History**

### Year-By-Year (since 1975)

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### Career Wins – Doubles

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### Missouri Valley Conference Champions – Singles

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<td>8-4</td>
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---

**UNI Conference Scholar Athletes**

- Carolina Hannes 1999
- Melinda Becker 1998
- Lisa Castenson 1995, 96
- Amie Crowley 2001
- Tiffany Dammer 1993, 94
- Danielle Farr 1994, 95
- Carie Houghton 1995
- Traci Jesse 1993
- Kendra Lindeman 2001
- Heather Mowery 1997, 98
- Karen Olsen 1997, 98
- Lisa Stanley 1998

---

**First Team**

1. Carrie Amsbaugh 2001
2. Melanie Becker 1999
3. Lisa Castenson 1995, 96
4. Amie Crowley 2001
5. Tiffany Dammer 1993, 94
6. Danielle Farr 1994, 95
7. Cari Houghton 1995
8. Traci Jesse 1993
10. Sarah Kendall 2005

---

**Second Team**

1. Carrie Amsbaugh 2002
2. Sara Kendall 2005
3. Jamie Joyce 2005
4. Agnessa Pukse 2005
5. Jamie Joyce 2005

---

**Honorific Mention**

1. Carie Amsbaugh 2002
2. Sara Kendall 2005
3. Tanya Riehl 2003
4. Jamie Joyce 2005
5. Agnessa Pukse 2005
6. Traci Jesse 1993
7. Kendra Lindeman 2001
8. Melissa Green 2000

---

**UNI All-MVC First Team**

1. Carrie Amsbaugh 2002
2. Melinda Becker 2005
3. Tiffany Dammer 1993, 94
4. Danielle Farr 1994, 95
5. Cari Houghton 1995
6. Traci Jesse 1993
7. Kendra Lindeman 2001
8. Sarah Kendall 2005
9. Carrie Amsbaugh 2002
10. Sarah Kendall 2005

---

**UNI All-MVC Select Team**

1. Meghan Paradela 2005
2. Tanya Riehl 2003
3. Jamie Joyce 2005
4. Agnessa Pukse 2005
5. Traci Jesse 1993
6. Kendra Lindeman 2001
7. Melissa Green 2000

---

**IT A Academic Awards**

The Intercollegiate Tennis Association honors juniors and seniors with 3.5 or higher grade point averages as ITA Scholar-Athletes. The ITA also recognizes teams with a combined GPA of 3.3 or higher as an ITA All-Academic team.

---

2005:

1. Carolina Hannes
2. Mariana Muraca
3. Jaime Joyce
4. Agnessa Pukse
5. Tanya Riehl

---

**University Record:**

- Singles: 279-335 (.455)
- Doubles: 241-289 (.455)
PANTHER HISTORY

Gateway/Missouri Valley Conference Regular Season Standings

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2004-05 Individual Records

**Singles**

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**Doubles**

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MVC = Valley dual meet record, Dual = complete spring dual record, Overall = fall and spring records combined.
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Wichita State(n)* L 0-9
Missouri State(n)* L 0-9
at Southern Illinois* L 1-8
at Bradley* L 0-7
at Drake* L 1-5
Drake(n)** Ret
Illinois State(n)** L 0-6
Indiana State(n)** L 0-6
1986-87
10-18, 0-4
at
Central W 8-1
at Grinnell W 7-2
Bradley L 2-7
1985-86
13-14, 0-5
at
Central W 9-0
Drake L 2-7
Marquette(n) W 5-4
at Bradley L 2-7
Illinois State(n)* W 6-3
at Luther W 5-4
at Drake L 1-8
at Wisconsin-La Crosse L 3-6
Western Illinois(n) L 2-7
Grinnell W 8-1
at Northern Illinois L 2-7
Wheaton(n) W 8-3
Toledo(n) L 3-6
Bradley(n)* L 2-5
Coe College W 9-0
at Iowa State L 1-8
Minnesota State W 8-1
Wisconsin-La Crosse W 7-2
St. Ambrose W 7-2
at Drake L 3-6
at Eastern Illinois L 4-5
Indiana State(n)* L 0-9
Missouri State(n)* L 2-7
Iowa State L 2-7
at Western Illinois* L 0-9
Illinois-Chicago(n) W 8-1
1984-85
30-6
at
Iowa State W 5-4
Drake L 2-7
St. Ambrose W 7-2
at Wartburg W 9-0
at William Penn W 9-0
at Central W 9-0
Upper Iowa L 9-0
Iowa State(n) W 5-4
at Western Illinois L 4-5
Eastern Illinois(n) W 8-1
at St. Louis University(n) L 6-0
at St. Ambrose W 8-1
William Penn W 9-0
Luther L 6-3
### Year-By-Year Results

#### 1980-81

Black Hawk Tennis Club

Beginning its seventh year of hosting the University of Northern Iowa tennis team, the Black Hawk Tennis Club (BHTC) is an all-season facility.

It boasts six indoor courts, six outdoor courts with a multilevel deck to view all the matches, an exercise room, pro shop and locker rooms. John Delorbe, owner of the BHTC since 1989, says the Club has great viewing areas both at the inside and outside courts.

The Club also hosts many special activities, such as clinics and lessons, Ladies and Men's Leagues, Junior Development Programs, mixed doubles tournaments and club meets. All this in addition to hosting between 10-15 Panther meets a season and practices.

The BHTC is the premiere facility in the Cedar Valley for year-round tennis.

***Beginning in the spring 2006 season, the Panthers will play outdoors on UNI's campus once the weather meets ITA standards. The courts are located west of the Towers, at the corner of 23rd Street and Hudson Road.

Strength & Conditioning

The UNI strength and conditioning program is a blend of science, technology and one-on-one attention to each student-athlete.

Throughout the year, UNI athletes can spend more time working on strength and conditioning than any other aspect of their sport. During the off-season, athletes work on strength improvement, speed, power, ability and conditioning.

During the athlete's first year on campus, baseline measures of strength, speed, power, flexibility and endurance are collected. Measures of both body composition and weight also are recorded. With this information, goals are set for development and maintenance. Programs are established for each athlete by Strength and Conditioning coach Jed Smith, who joined the Panther staff in June 2005.

Sports Medicine

The UNI sports medicine program features top-rate facilities and the outstanding services of sports and health care professionals.

The sports medicine program focuses on injury prevention. Staff members utilize Merac strength-testing devices, provide dietary analysis, measure physiological capability and outline programs to improve an athlete's flexibility.

Athletic trainers and physicians work together to design rehabilitation programs for injured athletes. A wide variety of facilities and equipment, not only in the Sports Medicine Lab but in the Wellness and Recreation Center, including swimming pools, Merac equipment, Stairmasters and various exercise equipment, help athletes rehabilitate injuries and minimize the loss of fitness during recuperative time.
The spectacular rise of the Missouri Valley Conference continued in 2004-05, and all signs point toward an ongoing resurgence for the nation's second-oldest NCAA Division I conference.

The Missouri Valley Conference continues to lead by example as one of college athletics' most progressive conferences. Since its inception in 1907, the Missouri Valley Conference has been regarded as a leader by its peers among today's collegiate athletic conferences.

While the Valley took center stage by hosting the NCAA Final Four in St. Louis in 2005, the overall performance of league teams in virtually every sport continues to raise the national profile of the conference.

Most noteworthy in 2004-05 was the success in the sport of men's basketball. For an amazing seventh consecutive season, the Valley earned multiple berths in the NCAA Tournament. And for only the third time in league history -- and the first since 1999 -- three conference teams qualified for post-season play.

Perhaps the most significant accomplishment for the MVC in men's basketball came when UNI finished the regular season in a tie for third place, lost to Missouri State in the first round of the Valley tournament and still gained an at-large NCAA berth. It marked the first time in league history that a team losing in the quarterfinals of the Valley tournament was selected to play in the NCAA championships in men's basketball.

In 2004-05, Wichita State captured a second consecutive MVC All-Sports Trophy behind a balanced performance by its programs, with nine of its sports programs finishing regular season play in first or second place. It was the Shockers' 11th overall All-Sports Trophy, the highest number for any Valley school.

During the tenure of Doug Elgin, the Valley's ninth commissioner, the Valley has been aggressive in hosting NCAA events in St. Louis. That role came to a spectacular climax in April 2005 as the conference collaborated with local partners to stage the Final Four at the Edward Jones Dome.

The 2005 host opportunity was the sixth in eight years for the MVC in St. Louis. The league had previously hosted men's regionals in 1998, 1999, and in 2004; a men's first/second round event in 2002 and the Women's Final Four in 2001. The Valley will host a men's basketball regional in 2007 and a Women's Final Four in 2009. Additionally, Creighton and the Valley will co-host a men's basketball first and second round in 2008 in Omaha.

The oldest Division I athletic conference west of the Mississippi River, the Valley has had numerous successes in its storied history.

The 2000-01 basketball season was highlighted by a Women's Final Four appearance by Missouri State, while in 2001-02, the league produced four Sweet 16 teams, including Southern Illinois (men's basketball), UNI (volleyball), Southern Methodist (men's soccer), and Drake (women's basketball). A College World Series appearance by the MSU baseball team highlighted the 2002-03 season; while Southern Illinois' men's basketball team was one win shy of a perfect 18-0 conference season in 2003-04, losing at UNI on the final day of the regular season.

This season, the league will conduct its 95th outdoor track and field championship, its 88th tennis championship, its 52nd baseball tournament, and its 68th golf championship for the men. Those programs, plus other current sponsored sports of cross country (47 years), indoor track (39), soccer (15) and swimming and diving (12), have helped solidify the Missouri Valley Conference as one of the most respected conferences nationally.

Athletic accomplishments on the men's athletics side include four national basketball championships, 17 trips to the NCAA Final Four, and a 1989 national baseball championship. In 2001, Missouri State added to the Valley women's accomplishments, as the Lady Bears advanced to the Women's Basketball Final Four in St. Louis. Creighton (2004) and MSU (2005) have claimed national championships (WNIT) in women's basketball, while MSU also has a 1992 NCAA Women's Final Four appearance, and Creighton (2003) and Drake (1999) have made semifinal trips to the WNIT post-season tournament.

League members include Bradley University, Creighton University, Drake University, the University of Evansville, Illinois State University, Indiana State University, Missouri State University, the University of Northern Iowa, Southern Illinois University, and Wichita State University.
U.S. News and World Report ranks UNI in the top two among public comprehensive universities in the Midwest.

Kiplinger Personal Finance magazine places us in the top 50 in the nation for best value in public colleges.

The Education Trust (www.edtrust.org) named UNI first among peer institutions nationally for overall high performance in graduation rates.

UNI's accounting program is among the best in the nation for percentage of accounting graduates passing the CPA exam.

UNI prides itself on smaller class sizes that enhance faculty-student interaction and personalized instruction. Thirty-two percent of classes have fewer than 20 students, and 83 percent have fewer than 40 students.

About 75 percent of UNI students get their first job in Iowa.

UNI students are actively involved with more than 200 student organizations, including special interest clubs, sororities and fraternities, religious groups and academic groups.

UNI is the alma mater of NFL and Super Bowl MVP Kurt Warner, as well as U.S. Senator Charles Grassley.

The UNI Wellness/Recreation Center, attached to the north side of the UNI-Dome, features a climbing wall, two pools, a running track, weights and fitness rooms, and courts for basketball, volleyball and racquetball.