



Chris Graham
Commissioner
grahamc@midwestconference.org

www.midwestconference.org

Tom Miller
Interim Sports Information Director
millert@ripon.edu

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Midwest Conference Baseball

Host St. Norbert Aims For School's Fourth Title, First Since 2003

RIPON, WIS. -- The 2009 Midwest Conference Baseball Championship Tournament is scheduled to begin this Friday and Saturday, May 8-9. All contests will be held at Mel Nicks Field on the campus of host St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wis., while one game will take place at Westwood Park in De Pere. The Green Knights locked up hosting duties with a pair of wins over Lawrence May 2, but the other remaining seeds were undecided until just days ago. After splitting its season series 2-2, Beloit and Ripon needed a one-game playoff to determine the No. 2 North team, while Grinnell and Monmouth, who already clinched berths, needed a playoff game to decide who was to be the South's No. 1 and No. 2 seeds. The Fighting Scots downed the Pioneers with a convincing 15-4 victory, but it took a walk-off RBI double for the Buccaneers to earn their first MWC Tournament berth since 1995.

Conference tourney action opens at 10 a.m. on Friday when the Green Knights host Grinnell and Beloit and Monmouth travel to Westwood Park for its first round match-up. The winners of the two games will meet at 1 p.m., while the loser's bracket game is scheduled right after at 4 p.m. A complete tournament schedule is located on Page 2 of this release.

#2S Grinnell (22-12, 8-4 MWC) at #1N St. Norbert (21-11, 12-4 MWC)

Grinnell is making its fourth appearance in the MWC Tournament since it was instituted before the 1989 season. Head Coach **Tim Hollibaugh** leads what is possibly the best team in Pioneer history, setting the school record for wins with 20 (now at 22), and will be looking for its first MWC Championship. Grinnell enters in the top three of the league in both hitting and pitching, boasting a team batting average of .312 and an earned run average of 4.61. The catalyst of the Pioneer offense is lead-off man **Ben Mendoza**. The senior shortstop leads the nation in doubles per game (0.66) while hitting .371 and going a perfect 9-for-9 in stolen base attempts. He's also tied for tops on the team in runs scored (37) thanks in large part to freshman catcher **Mike Nodzenski** (.345, 30 R, 8 HR) and junior outfielder **Paden Roder** (.378, 37 R, 6 HR), who rank first (36) and second (33) for Grinnell in RBI's, respectively. Three other Pioneers are hitting over .300 as senior first baseman **Brett Maloney** (.359, 16 R, 26 RBI), sophomore outfielder **Greg Sury** (.355, 27 R, 20 RBI), and junior outfielder **JP Prouty** (.359, 21 R, 16 RBI) provide an all-around threatening line-up for opposing pitchers. The ace of the Grinnell pitching staff seems to be junior **Ryan Harris**. The left-hander is 6-2 and fourth in the MWC in ERA (2.72), while right-handed senior **Gary Kahn** (3-0, 2.82 ERA) is holding opponents to a league-low .191 batting average. The Pioneer starters have to be comfortable turning the ball over to reliever **Ben Pope** (3-0, 2.70 ERA) as the righty leads the team in saves (3) and appearances (14).

Possibly the favorite headed into the tournament, **Tom Winske's** St. Norbert squad is coming off of its third consecutive North Division title, but will be looking for that Tournament Championship that has eluded them since 2003. The Green Knights will be led by reigning North Division Pitcher of the Year in junior **Trevin Hillesheim** (3-2, 2.61 ERA). Hillesheim never pitched in last year's tourney, but the righty has not allowed a home run in 2009 while only giving up three extra base hits in 38.0 innings. Senior right-hander **Justin Wotachek** (6-1, 3.32 ERA) leads the team in wins and is the only Green Knight to throw a complete-game shutout this season. Senior **Jordan Vater** (3-2, 4.82 ERA) is the squad's top reliever, as the righty has come out of the bullpen to make 13 appearances while recording two saves. St. Norbert enters with a team batting average of .307 led by junior outfielder **Jared Yost's** .473, which is second-best in the MWC. Yost is also tops on the team in runs (38), slugging percentage (.667), on-base percentage (.527), steals (22), and fielding percentage (.968). Junior **Tony Jandron** (.353, 34 R, 40 RBI) and sophomore **Brandon Hintz** (.343, 31 R, 14 RBI) round out one of the conference's best outfielders, while senior infielders **Cory Fuller** (.328, 20 R, 36 RBI) and **Brett Birkholz** (.353, 24 R) provide even more explosiveness to an already powerful Green Knight line-up.



#2N Beloit (25-7, 11-5 MWC) vs. #1S Monmouth (15-15, 8-4 MWC)

Coming off the best regular season in its history, Beloit has already set the team record for both overall and MWC victories. **Dave DeGeorge's** squad also leads the league in batting average (.339) and earned run average (4.44) and will be looking for its first Championship in its first tourney appearance since 1995. The Buccaneers have been the top MWC team on the basepaths as they have stolen 101 bases in 109 attempts with **Mike Kovach's** conference record 31 leading the way. The sophomore infielder also leads the league in batting average (.479), hits (67), and runs scored (41), in addition to being one of the team's top relievers and spot starters (5-1, 4.34 ERA). Two other Bucs have stolen over 20 bases with junior second baseman **Scott Slubowski** (.323, 31 R) and sophomore outfielder **Drew Oswald** (.369, 23 R) swiping 24 and 21, respectively. Junior shortstop **Ryan Schmitz** (.411, 32 R, 24 RBI) brings another plus .400 BA to the line-up while junior first baseman **Hunter Nelson** (.353, 30 R) has established himself as the league's top run producer with 45 RBI's. Beloit has possibly the conference's best one-two punches in pitchers **Jordan DeGeorge** (6-1, 2.68 ERA, 64 K) and **Rick Krajewski** (7-1, 4.35 ERA). DeGeorge, a right-handed junior, has already broken the school record for strikeouts in a season, while Krajewski, a senior lefty, has tied the record for wins in a season. Both lead the MWC in those categories.

After graduating all three of its 2008 First-Team All-MWC performers, **Roger Sander's** Monmouth club struggled early this season, losing seven of its first eight. The Fighting Scots seem to have righted the ship going 14-8 since, including winning four of their last six. The pitching staff has been the wheels behind the Monmouth machine that has captured its 31st South Division title. Both senior left-hander **Matt Bourne** (6-2, 2.90 ERA) and sophomore righty **Robbie Hinkle** (4-1, 2.98 ERA) carry sub-3.0 ERA's as the team's No. 1 and No. 2 starters, while Hinkle has thrown three complete-game shutouts this season. The bullpen has struggled for the Fighting Scots in 2009, but sophomore right-hander **Zach Myers** (0-1, 3.98 ERA) has been impressive in his eight relief appearances. Freshman infielder **Chad Kamm** is the only Monmouth player to start all 30 games, en route to leading the team in hitting (.443), runs scored (30), on-base percentage (.539), and fielding percentage (.992). Sophomore outfielder **Billy Herrin** (.345, 25 R) has been effective in the lead-off role, while freshman outfielder **Terry Davis** (.377, 27 R) has driven in a team-high 36 RBI's from the No. 4 hole. Senior **Kevin Sashko** (.321, 22 R, 27 RBI), freshman **Caleb Ruyle** (.316, 15 R), and junior **Chaz Baggio** (.452 in 31 at-bats) are all capable of playing multiple infield positions.



--2009 MWC Championship Schedule--

Friday, May 8

Game 1

#2S Grinnell at #1N St. Norbert 10 a.m.

Game 2

#2N Beloit at #1S Monmouth 10 a.m.

Game 3

Winner of Game 1 vs. Winner of Game 2 1 p.m.

Game 4

Loser of Game 1 vs. Loser of Game 2 4 p.m.

Saturday, May 9

Game 5

Loser of Game 3 vs. Winner of Game 4 10 a.m.

Game 6 - Championship

Winner of Game 3 vs. Winner of Game 5 1 p.m.

Second Championship (if necessary) 1 p.m.

--MWC Baseball Championship Tournament History--

	Record	Titles	Tournament Appearances (titles in bold)
Monmouth	24-20	5 *	20 ('89, '90, '91, '92, '93, '94, '95, '96, '97, '98, '00, '01, '02, '03, '04, '05, '06, '07, '08, '09)
Ripon	36-18	10 *	19 ('89, '90, '91, '92, '93, '94, '96, '97, '98, '99, '00, '01, '02, '03, '04, '05, '06, '07, '08)
St. Norbert	18-19	3	14 ('94, '95, '96, '97, '99, '00, '02, '03, '04, '05, '06, '07, '08, '09)
Knox	14-16	1	9 ('89, '90, '91, '92, '97, '99, '02, '03, '08)
Illinois College	3-10	1	8 ('94, '95, '96, '98, '99, '04, '05, '07)
Beloit	3-8	-	5 ('91, '92, '93, '95, '09)
Grinnell	1-6	-	4 ('00, '01, '06, '09)
Carroll	3-3	-	2 ('98, '01)
Lawrence	2-3	-	2 ('89, '90)
Coe	1-2	-	1 ('93.)

* Monmouth & Ripon declared co-champions in 1990

italics indicate former MWC member

--MWC Championship History--

YEAR	MWC CHAMPION	NORTH CHAMPION	SOUTH CHAMPION
1953	Carleton	---	---
1954	Coe, Knox	---	---
1955	Coe	---	---
1956	St. Olaf	St. Olaf	Knox
1957	Carleton	Carleton	Coe
1958	Coe	---	---
1959	Coe	St. Olaf	Coe
1960	Coe, St. Olaf *	St. Olaf	Coe
1961	Coe	St. Olaf	Coe
1962	Ripon	Ripon	Coe
1963	Ripon	Ripon	Knox
1964	Carleton	Carleton	Knox
1965	Ripon	Ripon	Coe
1966	Ripon	Ripon	Monmouth
1967	Ripon	Ripon	Monmouth
1968	St. Olaf	St. Olaf	Monmouth
1969	St. Olaf	St. Olaf	Monmouth
1970	St. Olaf	St. Olaf	Cornell
1971	St. Olaf	St. Olaf	Monmouth
1972	St. Olaf/Lawrence *	St. Olaf/Lawrence	Monmouth
1973	St. Olaf	---	---
1974	St. Olaf, Ripon, Coe, Monmouth !	---	---
1975	Monmouth	---	---
1976	No Champion	---	---
1977	Lawrence	---	---
1978	Coe	Lawrence (East)	Coe (West)
1979	Lawrence	Lawrence (East)	Monmouth (West)
1980	Lawrence, Monmouth *	Lawrence (East)	Coe (West)
1981	Monmouth	Ripon (East)	Monmouth (West)
1982	Monmouth	Ripon	Monmouth
1983	Monmouth	St. Norbert	Monmouth
1984	Illinois College	Lawrence	Illinois College
1985	Monmouth, Coe *	St. Norbert	Monmouth
1986	Knox	St. Norbert	Knox
1987	Monmouth	Ripon	Monmouth
1988	Monmouth	Ripon	Monmouth
1989	Ripon	Ripon	Monmouth
1990	Monmouth, Ripon *	Ripon	Monmouth
1991	Monmouth	Ripon	Monmouth
1992	Monmouth	Ripon	Monmouth
1993	Monmouth, Coe, Knox #	Ripon	Monmouth
1994	Ripon	Ripon	Monmouth
1995	Illinois College	St. Norbert	Illinois College
1996	St. Norbert	St. Norbert	Monmouth
1997	St. Norbert	Ripon	Monmouth
1998	Ripon	Ripon	Monmouth
1999	Ripon	Ripon	Illinois College
2000	Ripon	St. Norbert	Grinnell
2001	Ripon	Ripon	Monmouth
2002	Monmouth	Ripon	Monmouth
2003	St. Norbert	Ripon	Monmouth
2004	Ripon	Ripon	Monmouth
2005	Ripon	St. Norbert	Monmouth
2006	Ripon	Ripon	Monmouth
2007	Ripon	St. Norbert	Monmouth
2008	Knox	St. Norbert	Knox
2009	TBD	St. Norbert	Monmouth

--Baseball Championship Breakdown--

Ripon - 17 ('62, '63, '65, '66, '67, '74, '89, '90, '94, '98, '99, '00, '01, '04, '05, '06, '07)

Monmouth - 14 ('74, '75, '80, '81, '82, '83, '85, '87, '88, '90, '91, '92, '93, '02)

Coe - 10 ('54, '55, '58, '59, '60, '61, '74, '78, '85, '93)

St. Olaf - 9 ('56, '60, '68, '69, '70, '71, '72, '73, '74)

Knox - 4 ('54, '86, '93, '08)

Lawrence - 4 ('72, '77, '79, '80)

St. Norbert - 3 ('96, '97, '03)

Carleton - 3 ('53, '57, '64)

Illinois College - 2 ('84, '95)

Italics indicate former MWC member

--Divisional Championship Breakdown--

NORTH (East)		SOUTH (West)	
Ripon	23	Monmouth	31
St. Norbert	10	<i>Coe</i>	8
<i>St. Olaf</i>	9	Knox	5
Lawrence	5	Illinois College	3
<i>Carleton</i>	2	Grinnell	1
		<i>Cornell</i>	1

Italics indicate former MWC member

* indicates co-champions # indicates tri-champions ! indicates quad-champions



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