



2009 GLIAC Baseball Preview

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Ashland Picked to Win 2009 GLIAC Baseball Title

Grand Valley State Places Second, Wayne State Finishes Third In Preseason Balloting

BAY CITY, Mich. -- The head baseball coaches of the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) chose Ashland University to win the league's 2009 championship.

Ashland, a participant in the 2008 NCAA Division II World Series, received five of seven possible first-place votes and tallied 45 points. The Eagles edged out Grand Valley State University, who received two first-place votes and tallied 44 points. Ashland earned a berth in the 2008 NCAA Division II World Series after posting a victory over Wayne State University in the 2008 North Central Regional Championship Game. The Eagles fell to Ouachita Baptist (Ark) in the Series in their final game of the season, 12-5.

Wayne State, which received one first-place vote and tallied 36 points to land at third in the poll. The Warriors were the No. 1 seed in the 2008 GLIAC tournament after posting the league's top regular season record (23-5). Saginaw Valley State University recorded 31 points, good enough for fourth. The University of Findlay recorded 25 points to place fifth in the poll. The Oilers finished runner-up in last season's league tournament.

In its first full season in the GLIAC, Tiffin University placed sixth in the poll with 18 points. Hillsdale College finished seventh, having recorded 15 points. Northwood University placed eighth in the poll with 10 points.

Each of the GLIAC's eight head coaches ranked the teams in the conference, but were not allowed to rank their own team. The first-place team on each ballot received seven points, while the second-place team received six points, etc.

The 2009 GLIAC postseason baseball tournament is slated for May 7-9 in Chillicothe, Ohio. All games will be played at Chillicothe's V.A. Memorial Stadium, home of the Chillicothe Paints, a Class "A" member of the independent Frontier League, which fields teams throughout Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri.

GLIAC baseball teams open the 2009 conference season on March 18.

2009 GLIAC Baseball Preseason Coaches' Poll

Rank	School (first-place votes)	Points
1.	Ashland (5)	45
2.	Grand Valley State (2)	44
3.	Wayne State (1)	36
4.	Saginaw Valley State	31
5.	Findlay	25
6.	Tiffin	18
7.	Hillsdale	15
8.	Northwood	10

2008 GLIAC Baseball Final Standings

Place	School	GLIAC (Overall)
1.	Wayne State	23-5 (34-19)
2.	Grand Valley State*	17-7 (34-13)
3.	Ashland	17-7 (40-18)
4.	Findlay	18-8 (28-21)
5.	Saginaw Valley State	17-9 (31-13)
6.	Mercyhurst	13-19 (27-25)
7.	Hillsdale	10-18 (17-29)
8.	Northwood	7-25 (22-28)
#	Tiffin	(19-24)

- *Independent Division II Overall Record*
* - *Grand Valley State was crowned the 2008 GLIAC Baseball Champion by winning the GLIAC Postseason Tournament.*

The following are season previews on each of the GLIAC's Eight Baseball Teams:

Ashland Eagles

Head Coach: John Schaly

22nd Season (803-411)

Last Season: (40-18, 17-7 GLIAC)



	<u>Players</u>	<u>Starters</u>
Returners:	21	11

Top Returners:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Ben Minard	1B/P	Jr
(All-America; Regional/GLIAC Player of the Year)		
Jacob Petkac	3B	Jr
(All-America; 1st Team All-Region/All-GLIAC)		
Tyson Rowland	CF	Sr
(Honorable Mention All-GLIAC)		
Todd Schlenkerman	RHP	Sr
Matt Schultz	RHP	Sr

Top Newcomers:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Brian Lonjak	P	So
Austin Ritson	3B/P	Jr
Jason Cress	SS	Jr

Outlook:

The Eagles look to compete for a GLIAC Championship and postseason success this season. Ashland returns 11 starters from a team that made it to the World Series and finished fifth. John Schaly returns for his 12th season for the Eagles and his 21st overall. At Ashland, he has a record of 440-193, with an overall record of 803-411. The Eagles return two All-Americans at first and third base. Junior first baseman Ben Minard earned three All-America honors last season as well as being named conference and region player of the year. Minard batted .435 with 11 homers and drove in 61 runs. Junior third baseman Jacob Petkac earned All-America honors as well as being named first team all region and GLIAC. Petkac batted .408 with 10 homers and drove in 65 runs. AU returns quality pitching with Minard, senior Matt Schultz, senior Todd Schlenkerman, junior Jeremy Sloan and sophomore Brad Thomas. The Eagles will attempt to integrate five new position player starters, but return their top two hitters from a team that hit .349. Ashland opens up the regular season against Bellarmine on Feb. 21st.

Findlay Oilers

Head Coach: Troy Berry

6th Season (123-127)

Last Season: (28-21, 18-8 GLIAC)



	<u>Players</u>	<u>Starters</u>
Returners:	12	3

Top Returners:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Brian Sampsel	1B/DH	Sr
(08' 1st Team All-GLIAC; 2nd Team All-Region; 07' 1st Team All-GLIAC; 1st Team All-Region)		
Ryan Rothenbuhler	P	So
Matt Weber	P	Jr
Alex Raymond	C	Jr
Kyle Wilson	OF	So

Top Newcomers:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Preston Zachrich	P	Fr
(1st Team All-Ohio Twice)		
Ross Guisinger	OF	Fr
(All-Ohio 3 times; Putnam County League Player of the Year 3 times)		
Nathaniel Fitch	IF	Fr
1st Team All-Conference		

Outlook:

The Oilers are coming off of a 28-21 season in which they made the GLIAC Tournament, eventually reaching the championship game for the second time in school history. This season, Findlay will be in a rebuilding mode as they welcome a great number of new faces to the program. The returnees for Findlay will be led by senior Brian Sampsel who was named First Team All-GLIAC and Second Team All-Region last year after hitting .378 with 27 doubles and 31 RBI's.

Grand Valley State Lakers
Head Coach: Steve Lyon
15th Season (488-253-2)
Last Season: (34-13, 17-7 GLIAC)



	<u>Players</u>	<u>Starters</u>
Returners:	17	7

Top Returners:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Casey Robrahn	CF	Sr
(08' 1st Team All-GLIAC)		
Andre Benjamin	LHP	Sr
(08' 1st Team All-GLIAC)		
Brad Raj	RHP/3B	Jr
(08' 2nd Team All-GLIAC)		
Matt Nickels	OF	Sr
(08' 2nd Team All-GLIAC)		
Corey Maguire	1B	Jr
(08' Honorable Mention All-GLIAC)		

Top Newcomers:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Kyle Gendron	2B	Jr
(WMU Transfer; .308 as sophomore at WMU)		
Ben Knuth	RHP	Sr
(Junior College WS MVP as Freshman at GRCC)		
Torri Aquirre	OF	So

Outlook:

Grand Valley State returns seven position starters and four starting pitchers to the mix for the 2009 campaign. The Lakers captured their sixth straight GLIAC title and advanced to the NCAA DII North Central Regional for the seventh consecutive year in 2008. Senior LHP Andre Benjamin earned First-Team All-ABCA and All-GLIAC honors in 2008 after posting a 10-1 record with a 3.09 ERA. Benjamin notched 54 strikeouts 75.2 innings of work. Junior RHP/3B Brad Raj was 6-2 with a 4.37 ERA on the mound, while hitting .315 with 29 hits and 21 runs scored at 3rd base. Sophomore Joe Jablonski was 5-0 with a 2.77 ERS in 39.0 innings of work, while David Bowman tallied six saves and a 2-2 record in 18 appearances. Senior CF Casey Robrahn was a First-Team All-ABCA and All-GLIAC performer a year ago. Robrahn hit .451 with 73 hits, 14 doubles, 43 RBIs and 47 runs scored. OF Matt Nickels hit .367 with 40 hits, 30 runs and 18 RBIs, while INF Josh Hillyard hit at a .356 clip with 57 hits, 31 RBIs and 46 runs scored.

Hillsdale Chargers
Head Coach: Paul Noce
16th Season (273-395-1)
Last Season: (17-29, 10-18 GLIAC)



	<u>Players</u>	<u>Starters</u>
Returners:	17	7

Top Returners:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Brandon Hubbard	SS	Sr
(07' 2nd Team All-GLIAC)		
Adam Connell	IF	So
Jesse Smith	OF	Sr
Anthony Giarmo	C	So
Scott Monterastelli	P	Sr

Top Newcomers:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Chris Stephens	C	Fr
John Bonvillian	IF	Fr
Kris Morris	IF/P	Fr

Outlook:

The Hillsdale College baseball team will incorporate more first-year players into a veteran lineup in 2009. Senior Brandon Hubbard is the most experienced player on the team, returning for his fourth year as a starter at shortstop. He is on pace to break several career records this season, including the mark for doubles. Adam Connell and Jesse Smith both batted well over .300 in their first seasons with the team in 2008, and return. The pitching staff will be led by senior Scott Monterastelli, who had a team-high five wins in 2008. A deep and talented freshman class also joins the program, and starters could emerge in the infield, outfield and on the pitching staff.

Northwood Timberwolves
Head Coach: Joe DiBenedetto
21st Season (493-491)
Last Season: (22-28, 7-25 GLIAC)



	<u>Players</u>	<u>Starters</u>
Returners:	18	6

Top Returners:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Matt Czajkowski	OF	Jr
(08' Honorable Mention All-GLIAC)		
Clay Rosette	OF	Sr
Michael Goodwin	2B	So
Matt Toporski	P	Jr

Top Newcomers:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Mark Heard	P	Fr
Adam Rider	OF	Jr
Matt Johnson	SS	Fr

Outlook:

Northwood hopes to take a step forward from last season's 22-28 campaign that saw them go 7-25 in the GLIAC. The Timberwolves feature 18 players that return from last year's team, led by outfielders Matt Czajkowski and Clay Rosette. Czajkowski hit .380 and earned Honorable Mention All-GLIAC honors, while Rosette set a school record for RBI's in a season with 51. Matt Toporski returns to the rotation after posting a 5.13 ERA in 10 starts a year ago. Even with the experience coming back, the Timberwolves could have as many as five newcomers in their starting lineup, led by outfielder Adam Rider and short-stop Matt Johnson.

Saginaw Valley State Cardinals
Head Coach: Walt Head
28th Season (752-505-5)
Last Season: (31-13, 17-19 GLIAC)



	<u>Players</u>	<u>Starters</u>
Returners:	21	9

Top Returners:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Andrew Doyle	P	Jr
(08' 1st Team All-GLIAC)		
Jon Tibaudo	P	Jr
Chase Coulter	SS	Jr
Charlie Thomas	RF	Jr
Josh Peterson	LF	Sr

Top Newcomers:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Ryan Longstreth	P	Fr
Steve Janes	P	Fr
Jason Potts	3B	Fr

Outlook:

The Saginaw Valley State University baseball team is looking to bounce back strong after a successful but somewhat disappointing 2008 season, one in which they missed the GLIAC tournament by one win. After losing six seniors last year, five of them starters and four of them All-GLIAC performers, the 2009 team will be one of the youngest in years. Even though the 09 team may be lacking in experience, head coach Walt Head is optimistic. "We have a really young team this year, but those young guys are also solid ballplayers who will be able to grow and contribute more and more as the year progresses," says Head, who is entering his 27th year as the Cardinals head coach. Head realizes that his team will be a little wet behind the ears but is confident that a tough Florida schedule and solid pre-season work ethic will prepare them for the GLIAC season — which has changed its format for the 09 season. "We will learn a lot in Florida this year; it's going to be a challenge with our schedule as tough as it is. We are either going to see guys step up, play well, and become leaders or we are going to come home unhappy and with quite a few losses."

Tiffin Dragons

Head Coach: Lonny Allen

19th Season (365-393-1)

Last Season: (19-24 Overall)



	<u>Players</u>	<u>Starters</u>
Returners:	19	11

Top Returners:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Devin Rudolph	OF	Jr
Ty Blake	OF	Jr
Eric Ludrowsky	P	Sr
Trevor Woodjets	P/SS	Jr
Kyle Klinker	P	So

Top Newcomers:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Pat Curtin	P/1B	Fr
(GCL "Player of the Year")		
Jordan Chiero	1B	Fr
Lee Kerns	P	Fr

Outlook:

The Tiffin University Baseball team looks to make an immediate impact in their first year of competition in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. The Dragons return five starters in the field from the 2008 squad that hit .306 on the year and averaged 6.3 runs per game. Junior centerfielder Ty Blake and junior rightfielder Devin Rudolph locked down two of the outfield spots. Blake started forty games in 2008, hitting .291 and driving in 35 RBIs, good enough for second on the team. Meanwhile, Rudolph finished second in batting average (.391), runs (38), and hits (59). The Dragons pitching staff will benefit from returning the majority of its staff from this year. Senior Eric Ludrowsky returns after leading the team in innings pitched with 58.1 in 2008, while posting a 5-4 record and a 4.47 ERA. Trevor Woodjets led the team in 2008 with five saves as the primary closer. Overall, Coach Allen was encouraged by last year's results and hopes an influx of young talent will help spark the team to new heights. "We had some great wins last year, including two against Division I teams, so the talent is there," said Coach Allen, "With everyone working together as a team, we believe that play-offs are a possibility."

Wayne State Warriors

Head Coach: Ryan Kelley

1st Season (0-0)

Last Season: (34-19, 23-5 GLIAC)



	<u>Players</u>	<u>Starters</u>
Returners:	24	11

Top Returners:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Ryan LaPensee	OF	Jr
(Two-time HM All-GLIAC; 07' Freshman of the Year; 07' 2nd Team All-Region; 07' Gold Glove; two-time All-Canadian 3rd. Team)		
Michael Wiseman	C	R-So
('08 HM All-GLIAC/Freshman of Year; '08 Regional All-Tournament Team)		
Adam Kaminski	P/1B	Sr
('08 Daktronics HM All-America/1st Team All-Region; 2nd Team All-GLIAC)		
Drew Churchward	OF	R-Sr
('08 Regional All-Tournament Team; Gold Glove)		
Dane Little	SP	Sr
('08 2nd Team All-GLIAC)		

Top Newcomers:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>
Paul LaMantia	OF	Jr
Josh Wedesky	P	Fr
(2nd Team All-State; LSJ Dream Team)		
Jamie Bailey	IF	So

Outlook:

Former pitching coach Ryan Kelley will lead Wayne State in his first season as head coach, one year after the Warriors won a school-record 34 games and advanced to the championship game of the NCAA North Central Regional. Among Kelley's 19 returning letterwinners are senior captains Drew Churchward, Matthew Williams, and Dane Little. Churchward hit .317 with 27 RBI and a team-best 13 doubles, Williams received WSU's Most Improved Player award in 2008 and was the GLIAC co-leader in stolen bases (29) while batting .275 with 25 RBI and 50 runs scored, and Little was an All-GLIAC Second Team honoree with a 4-5 record and 57 strikeouts. Other returning players include junior outfielder Ryan LaPensee, a two-time All-GLIAC Honorable Mention selection and .408 career hitter; catcher Michael Wiseman, the 2008 GLIAC Freshman of the Year; and senior All-American Adam Kaminski, who batted .371 and collected three saves and 23 strikeouts in 13 pitching appearances.