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--August 5, 2008--

HCAC Football Preseason Poll

Franklin Picked by Coaches to Repeat as HCAC Football Champ

GREENWOOD, IN – Franklin College rose to the top of the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference football standings for the first time last fall, posting a 7-0 conference mark. The Grizzlies have been selected as the favorite to win a second straight league crown in 2008, according to a poll of the HCAC's eight head coaches.

Franklin, 9-2 overall in 2007, held off Mount St. Joseph in the preseason poll, receiving 61 points and six first place votes.

Mount St. Joseph placed second in the voting with 58 points and the other two first place votes, while Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology finished third with 46 points. Defiance College (35), Anderson University (31), Manchester College (27), Hanover College (18), and Bluffton University (12) round out the poll.

The Grizzlies will be looking for their second straight conference crown under the direction of 2007 HCAC Coach of the Year Mike Leonard. Prior to Leonard's arrival in 2003, FC failed to have a winning record in conference play since the 1998 season.

2008 HCAC Preseason Poll

	Team	Points
1.	Franklin	61 (6)
2.	Mount St. Joseph	58 (2)
3.	Rose-Hulman	46
4.	Defiance	35
5.	Anderson	31
6.	Manchester	27
7.	Hanover	18
8.	Bluffton	12

Franklin returns the 2007 HCAC Offensive Player of the Year in quarterback **Chad Rupp (Evansville, Ind./Memorial)**. Rupp dominated the conference in all passing categories last fall, racking up 3,250 yards and 35 touchdowns in 11 games through the air. The senior completed 70.2% of his passes and led the nation with a 194.9 passing efficiency. In seven conference contests, Rupp averaged 307.6 yards passing per game and tossed 22 touchdowns, while completing 70.9% of his passes. The Grizzlies' offensive attack dominated HCAC defenses last season and will look to improve on those numbers in 2008. FC averaged a league-best 45.1 points per game and totaled 504.5 yards of offense per contest to lead the league.

The blue and gold return two integral parts of their defense in 2008. The Grizzlies D ranked third in the HCAC in scoring defense last fall, allowing 22.5 points per game. Franklin's unit will look to improve on a sixth place finish in total defense last season, which surrendered 372.0 yards per ballgame. Senior defensive end **Dan McManus (Cincinnati, Ohio/Roger Bacon)** and senior defensive back **Roshawn Hill (South Bend, Ind./Adams)** return in an effort to lead the Franklin unit. McManus led the Grizzlies with 13.5 tackles for loss and 5.5 sacks last fall to earn a spot on the All-HCAC First Team. Hill finished 2007 leading the HCAC with six interceptions and added 41 tackles and a fumble recovery in the defensive backfield.

Franklin fell in the first round of the NCAA Division III playoffs 44-42 at home to North Central College, and will look to return to the tournament once again this fall. The Grizzlies begin the season ranked No. 21 in the preseason *D3football.com* rankings and open the season at home against Baldwin-Wallace.

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Mount St. Joseph saw its run of conference championships end at three straight last fall, finishing 2007 with a 9-2 record overall and 6-1 in conference play. The Lions earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Division III tournament but fell on the road to Wabash 31-21. The Mount will look to reestablish its hold at the top of the conference standings this fall with their top ranked defense. The Lions led the league last season allowing only 15.6 points per game and 280.8 yards per contest. MSJ will see four All-HCAC First Team award winners on the defensive side of the ball return to the gridiron in 2008. Junior linebacker **Alex Harbin (Cincinnati, Ohio/Elder)** led the Lions with 13 tackles for loss in 2007, while senior defense back **Nick Yahl (St. Mary's, Ohio/Memorial)** finished with 80 tackles and 10.5 tackles for loss. Senior defensive backs **Rick Stautberg (Cincinnati, Ohio/Elder)** and **Phil Poetter (Cincinnati, Ohio/Anderson)** each recorded six interceptions last fall to rank first in the HCAC. MSJ will open up the 2008 season at home against Wilmington (OH).

Rose-Hulman finished third in the conference last fall with a 4-3 conference record, finishing 7-3 overall. The Engineers ranked third in the conference in scoring offense, averaging 26.2 points per game last season. The offensive side of the ball returns its signal caller in junior **Derek Eitel (Marshall, Ill./H.S.)**, while the defense returns HCAC Defensive Player of the Year **Paul Spreen (Williams, Ind./Bedford North Lawrence)**. Eitel ranked second in the league last fall, averaging 226.9 yards per game through the air. He completed 52.7% of his attempts and ranked fourth in the HCAC with 13 passing touchdowns, earning first team All-HCAC honors. Spreen earned top bill in the conference on defense, recording 67 tackles, 19 tackles for loss, 7.5 sacks, four pass break-ups, and two forced fumbles. Sophomore tight end **Reed Eason (St. Louis, Mo./Parkway North)** earned Freshman of the Year honors last fall and will look to improve on his rookie numbers. Eason ranked third in the conference with 4.7 receptions per game as a freshman, totaling 534 yards and five touchdowns for the Engineers. RHIT will open the season at home against Earlham.

Defiance finished along side Rose in the conference standings with a 4-3 conference mark. The Jackets finished 5-5 overall in 2007 and will look to better that mark in 2008. The Defiance offense will look to fill the void left by Co-Offensive Player of the Year Luke Dillon. The senior wide receiver totaled 1,241 yards receiving and 14 touchdowns last fall, dominating HCAC defensive backfields. DC will depend on senior running back **Lewis Caralla (Tampa, Fla./East Lake)** to help pick up some of that offensive yardage. Caralla ranked third in the HCAC on the ground last fall, rushing for 793 yards and six touchdowns. Defiance fielded the No. 2 defense in the Heartland last season, allowing 20.6 points per game and 316.4 yards per outing. The Yellow Jackets return All-HCAC First Team member **Keith Snyder (Martin, Mich./H.S.)** from that defensive squad. The senior defensive back led the team with 111 tackles and added 5.5 tackles for loss and two interceptions to his résumé. Defiance will open the 2008 season on the road against Muskingum (OH).

Anderson finished 2007 with a 4-6 overall record and a 3-4 mark in HCAC action. Junior quarterback **Chase Thurston (Yorktown, Ind./H.S.)** returns to lead the Ravens' offensive attack. AU ranked sixth in offense as a team in 2007, averaging 18.3 points and 310.2 yards per game. Thurston threw for 1,341 yards with four touchdowns and 14 interceptions last fall. The Ravens will look to improve on the defensive side of the ball where they ranked seventh in the league (29.8 ppg). Senior defensive lineman **Jeremiah Townsell (South Bend, Ind./Riley)** will return after leading the team with 82 tackles, 19 tackles for loss, and six sacks a year ago. AU will open the season at home against rival Taylor (IN).

Manchester finished last season 1-6 in conference play, 3-7 overall. The Spartans return junior running back **Brandon Wells (Woodburn, Ind./Woodlan)** to the backfield this season. Wells ranked fourth in the HCAC in rushing last fall with 748 yards and six touchdowns on the ground for the Spartans. Manchester will return both quarterbacks used during the 2007 campaign. Junior **Caleb Grimes (South Haven, Mich./H.S.)** and senior **Joel Hawkins (Goshen, Ind./Fairfield)** will spear the dual quarterback offense for MC. Grimes passed for 1,028 yards and nine touchdowns last fall, while Hawkins was a dual threat under center rushing for 446 yards and passing for 562 yards. Manchester will open the season on the road against Trine (IN) University.

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Hanover posted a 2-5 conference mark and 2-8 overall record last season in coach Wayne Perry's final season as head coach. Joe Austin will lead the Hanover program this fall after previously being the offensive coordinator at the University of Dubuque (IA). The Panthers finished seventh in the conference in scoring offense (18.2) and last in scoring defense (38.8) last fall. Senior wide receiver **Tyler Thiems (Indianapolis, Ind./North Central)** will return as one of the top offensive weapons for the Panthers. Thiems earned First Team All-HCAC honors last fall with 534 yards and four touchdowns receiving. Hanover will open the 2008 season at Centre (KY).

Bluffton finished 1-9 overall last season with a conference mark of 1-6. The Beavers suffer a loss to graduation, losing linebacker Sam McCullough. McCullough ranked third nationally with 150 tackles last season and also contributed 13.5 tackles for loss, five sacks, and two interceptions. Senior defensive lineman **Kyle Rode (Delphos, Ohio/Delphos Jefferson)** will look to fill the void left by McCullough. Rode tallied 42 tackles a year ago with a team-high 8.5 sacks. New head coach Tyson Veidt will lead the Beavers to Alma (MI) for the season opener.


The first games of the 2008 season are on September 6 with the conference season slated to begin on October 4.


Players to Watch


	Anderson	Lucas Hurst	Sophomore	Defensive Back	Clayton, Ohio/Northmont
		Samuel Weaver	Senior	Offensive Line	Warsaw, Ind./Warsaw
		Chase Thurston	Junior	Quarterback	Yorktown, Ind./H.S.
		Nathan Lundy	Senior	Offensive Line	North Webster, Ind./Wawasee
		Terrence Perkey	Senior	Running Back	Elkhart, Ind./Jimtown
		Jerry Townsell	Senior	Defensive Line	South Bend, Ind./Riley
		Tommy Helms	Senior	Defensive Line	Westport, Ind./South Decatur
	Bluffton	Joel Sienicki	Senior	Tight End	Goshen, Ind./Northridge
		Kyle Rode	Senior	Defensive Line	Delphos, Ohio/Delphos Jefferson
		Mitch Agner	Senior	Linebacker	Leipsic, Ohio/H.S.
		Brandon Herr	Junior	Defensive Back	Bluffton, Ohio/H.S.
	Defiance	Lewis Caralla	Senior	Running Back	Tampa, Fla./East Lake
		Dan Orta	Senior	Defensive Line	Defiance, Ohio/H.S.
		Nick Nicol	Junior	Offensive Line	Temperance, Mich./Bedford
		Chuck Bowman	Junior	Linebacker	Monroe, Mich./H.S.
		Travis Guisinger	Junior	Defensive Back	Lima, Ohio/Elida
		Keith Snyder	Senior	Defensive Back	Martin, Mich./H.S.
		Dustin Supan	Junior	Defensive Back	Medina, Ohio/Buckeye
		Austin Hedderly	Sophomore	Defensive Line	Dublin, Ohio/Dublin Coffman
	Franklin	Chad Rupp	Senior	Quarterback	Evansville, Ind./Memorial
		Dan McManus	Senior	Defensive End	Cincinnati, Ohio/Roger Macon
		Austin Gorrell	Senior	Receiver	Franklin, Ind./H.S.
		Roshawn Hill	Senior	Defensive Back	South Bend, Ind./Adams
		Levi Smythe	Senior	Defensive Line	Franklin, Ind./H.S.
		Nick Rulon	Senior	Defensive Line	Arcadia, Ind./Hamilton Heights
		Seth Qualls	Junior	Offensive Line	Evansville, Ind./Reitz
		Joe White	Senior	Defensive Back	Mooresville, Ind./H.S.


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	Bobby Smart	Junior	Wide Receiver	Coral Springs, Fla./H.S.
	Luke Keller	Senior	Defensive Line	Jasper, Ind./H.S.
	Tyler Thiems	Senior	Wide Receiver	Indianapolis, Ind./North Central
	Michael Spillman	Sophomore	Linebacker	Franklin, Ind./H.S.
	Daniel Cornely	Junior	Linebacker	Palmetto Bay, Fla./Palmetto
	Corry Stewart	Junior	Wide Receiver	Nashville, Tenn./Ryan
	Brock Goggins	Senior	Offensive Line	Linton, Ind./Linton-Stockton
	Jeremy Cook	Freshman	Running Back	Batesville, Ind./H.S.
	Rory Mannering	Freshman	Defensive Back	Walton, Ind./Lewis Cass

	Mike Depoy	Junior	Linebacker	South Bend, Ind./Clay
	Brandon Wells	Junior	Running Back	Woodburn, Ind./Woodlan
	Beau Bradtmiller	Senior	Wide Receiver	Markle, Ind./Norwell
	Caleb Grimes	Junior	Quarterback	South Haven, Mich./H.S.
	Joel Hawkins	Senior	Quarterback	Goshen, Ind./Fairfield
	Jared Yoder	Senior	Wide Receiver	Frankfort, Ind./Carroll
	Jeremiah Jones	Junior	Defensive Back	East Chicago, Ind./Central
	Tyler Pedersen	Senior	Linebacker	Angola, Ind./H.S.

	Tim Meiner	Senior	Wide Receiver	Hamilton, Ohio/Talawanda
	Matt Rosenberger	Junior	Defensive Line	Cincinnati, Ohio/Oak Hills
	Rocky Siegel	Senior	Linebacker	Cincinnati, Ohio/Glen Este
	Anthony Walsh	Junior	Offensive Line	Cincinnati, Ohio/Moeller
	Nick Yahl	Senior	Defensive Back	St. Mary's, Ohio/Memorial
	Alex Harbin	Junior	Linebacker	Cincinnati, Ohio/Elder
	Phil Poetter	Senior	Defensive Back	Cincinnati, Ohio/Anderson
	Rickey Stautberg	Senior	Defensive Back	Cincinnati, Ohio/Elder

	Reed Eason	Sophomore	Tight End	St. Louis, Mo./Parkway North
	Nate Richter	Senior	Wide Receiver	Zionsville, Ind./H.S.
	Ben Wassell	Junior	Linebacker	Robinson, Ill./H.S.
	Derek Eitel	Junior	Quarterback	Marshall, IL/H.S.
	Tim Schrock	Senior	Running Back	Avon, Ind./H.S.
	Paul Spreen	Senior	Defensive End	Williams, Ind/Bedford NL
	Kyle Stevens	Junior	Defensive Back	Santa Cruz, Cali./Harbor

For more information on the 2008 HCAC football season and up-to-date scores and statistics, please visit the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference website at www.heartlandconf.org.

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