

July 19, 2006

IOWA TO MEET TOLEDO IN FIRST ROUND OF PARADISE JAM

IOWA CITY, IA - - The University of Iowa men's basketball team will open the 2006-07 season Friday, November 17, meeting Toledo in the first round of the US Virgin Island Paradise Jam at University of the Virgin Islands. Along with Iowa and Toledo, the eight team field includes Alabama, College of Charleston, Middle Tennessee State, Villanova, Virginia Commonwealth and Xavier. The tournament begins Nov. 17 and concludes with the title game on Monday, Nov. 20. All games are played at the University of Virgin Islands Sports and Fitness Center in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas.

Iowa and Toledo will meet at 2:30 p.m. CT in the second game of the first round, following the opening game between Middle Tennessee State and Alabama. The winner of the Iowa vs. Toledo game will meet the winner of the Alabama vs. Middle Tennessee State Sunday, Nov. 19 at 5 p.m. CT. The losers of those two first round games will meet Sunday, Nov. 18 at 5 p.m. CT. All four final round games will be played on Monday, Nov. 20.

"We've been excited about our participation in this tournament ever since we were included in the field," said Iowa Coach Steve Alford. "And we know it is a strong field. Alabama and Villanova will likely be pre-season top 15 teams. Toledo won 20 games a year ago and returns four starters. Toledo plays a style much like Michigan State and presents a very difficult season opening game. It will be the early season pick to win the MAC next year."

The 2006 Paradise Jam marks the seventh year of the tournament, with the upcoming event featuring an eight-team field for the first time. Four of the teams in the 2006 field (Alabama, Iowa, Villanova and Xavier) competed in the 2006 NCAA Tournament. Wisconsin defeated Old Dominion to win the 2005 tournament.

"If you look at the entire field, we will be the team with the most question marks," added Alford. "To begin the season with three straight games in a very strong tournament will be a challenge for our young team. At the same time, it gives you a sense of where you stand."

Toledo posted a 20-11 record last season, losing in the title game of the MAC post-season tournament. The Rockets, coached by Stan Joplin, return a senior trio that includes guard Justin Ingram (14.6 ppg, 3.2 rpg), guard Koenta Howell (11.3 ppg, 4.3 rpg) and forward Florentino Valencia (12 ppg, 4.4 rpg).

Toledo holds a 3-0 series advantage over Iowa. The teams have not met since the Rockets defeated Iowa 74-72 in the first round of the 1979 NCAA Tournament in Bloomington, IN.

Villanova posted a 28-5 mark last season and reached the Elite Eight before losing to Florida, the eventual national champion. Alabama was 18-13, including wins over Florida and LSU, another Final Four team a year ago. Alabama, with five consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances, lost to UCLA, the national runner-up, in the second round last season.

Bobby Cremins, the former Georgia Tech coach, will be in his first season at College of Charleston, taking over a team that won 17 games last season. Middle Tennessee State, coached by Kermit Davis, features guard Kevin Kanaskie, the son of former Drake Coach Kurt Kanaskie, who played prep basketball in Des Moines.

Further information concerning the tournament can be found on the internet at www.paradisejam.com. Television plans for the tournament are not yet finalized.

