

[UIS coaches glad to be in Great Lakes Valley Conference](#)By **RON DICKERSON****THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER**

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Now that the University of Illinois at Springfield has secured membership in the Great Lakes Valley Conference, what's next?

"Keeping some of the exceptional volleyball talent in Springfield at home," said UIS coach Joe Fisher before Wednesday afternoon's press conference hosted by the Prairie Stars introducing them as the newest members of the GLVC.

The Great Lakes Valley is an NCAA Division II conference. UIS currently competes in the American Midwest Conference of the NAIA.

"We have a great school, a great facility, and now we're aligned with one of the most competitive conferences in the country. "We'll try and keep the local kids and reach out further into Chicago and the Metro East area."

But one area of concern Fisher won't have any worries about is playing back-to-back on Saturdays and Sundays, which the GLVC's Council of Presidents suggested when approving the 15-team conference's realignment into three five-team divisions.

The Prairie Stars currently play during the middle of the week and on the weekend in the American Midwest Conference.

"We play on various days of the week right now," said Fisher, who was an assistant coach at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville when the Cougars were members of the GLVC. "I prefer to play on the weekend, so that will eliminate two or three trips a week like we have now sometimes. It won't impact our players physically because we already play back-to-back games on back-to-back nights in tournaments."

UIS women's basketball coach Roy Gilmore coached at SIU-E from 2000-04. He knows what to expect at the next level.

"I know how tough it will be for our athletes on the court or field, and with the studies in the classroom, they'll be tested," Gilmore said. "Every team is a viable opponent."

Gilmore recognizes the geographic balance of the conference transcends travel and costs.

"Obviously, there are many benefits from a travel and cost standpoint," he said. "But now our student athletes won't miss as many classes, and they will have a little more time for recovery from a game."

UIS men's basketball coach Kevin Gamble said he has eight seniors for the 2008-09 season and would like to start GLVC conference play now.

"But we'll patiently await," he said. "We realize this move will give us more exposure, higher enrollment and more fans, which will create more exciting times at this center."

But there is one more reason Gamble is happy with the switch to the NCAA and membership in the GLVC.

"Our chancellor has wanted this for a long time," Gamble said of Richard Ringeisen, who hired Gamble to start the men's team. "I'm excited for him to get his wish. This is going to be challenging for our athletic department, but we'll transition nicely. We'll fit in."

For the men's soccer program, the move to the GLVC reunites the Prairie Stars with old-time NAIA rivals Rockhurst, Quincy and Wisconsin-Parkside.

"We've had a wonderful relationship with the NAIA and a lot of fun, but this is an excellent move for the university," UIS soccer coach Joe Eck said.

"We'll be able to renew some battles from years ago."

GLVC facts

School	Location
Bellarmine	Louisville, Ky.
Drury	Springfield, Mo.
Illinois-Springfield	Springfield
Indianapolis	Indianapolis
Ky. Wesleyan	Owensboro, Ky.
Lewis	Romeoville
Maryville	St. Louis
Missouri S&T	Rolla, Mo.
Mo.-St. Louis	St. Louis
N. Kentucky	Highland Heights., Ky.
Quincy	Quincy

Rockhurst Kansas City, Mo.
St. Joseph's Rensselaer, Ind.
Southern Indiana Evansville, Ind.
Wis.-Parkside Kenosha, Wis.

Championship sports — Baseball, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's cross country, men's and women's golf, men's and women's soccer, softball, men's and women's tennis, men's and women's track and field, women's volleyball

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