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UIS happy to host league tourneys

By **MARCIA MARTINEZ** (marcia.martinez@sj-r.com)

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The University of Illinois Springfield is ineligible to compete in postseason play, but that isn't keeping the school from hosting the Great Lakes Valley Conference men's and women's basketball tournaments March 6-7 at The Recreation and Athletic Center.

The university, which cannot compete because of its move this season to NCAA Division II from the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics' American Midwest Conference, is eager to host the GLVC Final Four. This is only the second neutral site for the tournament. It was played at Roberts Stadium in Evansville, Ind., from 1999-2007 before being moved to campus sites for two years.

"We think it will be great to bring those student-athletes as well as fans from Kansas City to Louisville, Ky., to Cincinnati, Indianapolis and possibly Milwaukee, Wis., to Springfield to see what we really have here at UIS," UIS athletic director Rodger Jehlicka said. "It was sort of a no-brainer once they asked us to do it.

"You're seeing four teams battle for the automatic spot in the national tournament. It's going to be a highly competitive basketball at a very reasonable price."

The GLVC semifinals will take place March 6. The women's championship game is March 7 at noon with the men's title contest following at 3:30 p.m.

Northern Kentucky swept the men's and women's titles last year.

Twelve teams qualify for the GLVC tournament — the top three finishers in each of the league's three divisions plus three wild-card teams. The rounds of the tournament leading up to the semifinals will be played at on-campus sites.

Southern Indiana banned

The best team in the conference won't compete in this season's tournament. The GLVC banned 23-1 Southern Indiana, the No. 2 team in the NABC/Division II national poll, from the tourney in October for academic indiscretions and providing and paying for transportation for student-athletes under former coach Rick Herdes.

UIS is competing this year in Division II as a provisional member. The school is eligible for the 2011 GLVC tournament once it earns it full membership for the 2010-11 academic year.

Maryville, also new to the league, is ineligible this season. Maryville is hosting next year's GLVC championships, according to GLVC commissioner Jim Naumovich at a press conference Monday at UIS.

The GLVC tournaments will take place over two weekends starting on Feb. 27. The fields for the tourneys have expanded from eight teams to 12 this season at the request of league coaches.

"When we had 11 conference members, eight teams qualified," said Naumovich, a Griffin High School graduate. "Then, we went from 11 to 14 and still eight teams qualified. Then, we went from 14 to 15 and we'll be going to 16 (with the addition of William Jewell later this year). I think they (the coaches) felt as tough as the league is from top to bottom that the more schools we add it is a fairer way or a more equitable way to advance in the postseason was to have more teams go.

"Twelve teams on both sides kind of bucks the trend nationally because there have been some leagues that have gone the opposite route. They've gone from taking eight to four and just playing a semifinal and final round. Our league has decided to try 12 for two years and see what happens."

UIS is selling advance tickets. Reserved seating costs \$12 and general admission seating is \$10. Student tickets cost \$5. Call UIS at 206-7017 for more information.

Marcia Martinez can be reached at 788-1547.

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