The Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC), which features 13 member NCAA Division II institutions, will embark on its sixth year in the 2004 football season and is presently regarded as one of the nation’s top gridiron conferences. Formerly known as the Midwest Intercollegiate Football Conference (MIFC), the MIFC merged into the GLIAC effective July 1, 1999. The MIFC had been in existence for nine years.

The merger was approved by the conference’s Executive Council on May 18, 1999, and ratified by the President’s Council. As a result, Indianapolis became an associate member as a football-only school. As part of the merger agreement, the GLIAC Executive Council granted Gannon a waiver until 2004 and this season represents the Golden Knights’ inaugural GLIAC campaign.

Following the 1989 season, the GLIAC dropped football as a conference-sponsored sport, and the Heartland Collegiate Conference (HCC), already a football-only conference, went out of existence as the MIFC was formed as a result of the two conferences merging.

On February 8, 1989, at Grand Valley State’s Eberhard Center, formal commitments were submitted by the six GLIAC institutions sponsoring football – Ferris State, Grand Valley State, Hillsdale, Northern Michigan, Saginaw Valley State and Wayne State – and the five HCC teams – Ashland, Butler, Indianapolis, St. Joseph’s (Ind.), and Wayne State – and the five HCC teams – Ashland, Butler, Indianapolis, St. Joseph’s (Ind.), and Wayne State to form the now defunct MIFC.

The GLIAC currently boasts the two-time defending national champions, Grand Valley State. GVSU captured its second straight national crown this last season by besting North Dakota, 10-3, in the NCAA Division II Championship game held Dec. 13 at Florence, Ala. The Lakers claimed their first-ever national title in 2002 (Dec. 14) with a 31-24 victory over Valdosta (Ga.) State. In the 2001 campaign (Dec. 8), GVSU made its initial championship game appearance as the Lakers suffered a 17-14 loss to North Dakota.

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