

# Best of the 2000s

Women's Division II Bulletin *looks back at the best of the best from the first decade of the new millennium*

by Gary Rubin, Editor and Publisher

**B**est of lists are hard to put together. Good thing we only do this once a decade. For the second time, *Women's Division II Bulletin* reveals its picks for the Best of the Decade, this time the 2000s.

Here's a look at the Best Program, Best Team, Best Player, Best Coach and Best Championship Game of the last 10 years. ●

## Best Program

**Northern Kentucky.** With two national championships during the decade, and three title game appearances, Northern Kentucky lays claim to the best Division II women's basketball program of the 2000s.

The Norse have consistently been a Division II power and were tops when it counted most — on the national stage.

### **Runners Up:**

**Cal Poly Pomona** — two national titles under Paul Thomas during the decade.

**Washburn** — three Elite Eight appearances and one championship for the Lady Blues. The team won more than 83 percent of its games under Ron McHenry.

**Delta State** — four 30-plus win seasons and eight NCAA tournament appearances.

**California (Pa.)** — The Vulcans ended the 2000s with back-to-back Elite Eight appearances and captured the 2004 national title.

## Best Coach

**Nancy Winstel** has led Northern Kentucky University for 27 seasons, and the 2000s were proof that she is one of the elite Division II coaches: three national championship game appearances, two



Division II titles, G L V C coaching honors, W B C A coaching awards, and surpassing the 600-win milestone earned her the

Best Coach of the 2000s.

### **Runners Up:**

**Curt Bailey, St. Rose** — Led the Golden Knights to a 34-1 record in 2000 and lost in the Elite Eight. St. Rose was a power in the early part of the decade.

**Paul Thomas, Cal Poly Pomona** — Had the Broncos successfully defend their national title in 2002.

**Sandra Rushing, Delta St.** — A record of 177-43 at DSU in seven seasons and a Molten/*WDIIB* Coach of the Year Award in 2008.

**Ron McHenry, Washburn** — In nine years, has won 83 percent of his games. Three Elite Eight appearances in the 2000s and one national title.

## Best Player

South Dakota senior **Mandy Koupal** led the North Central Conference in



scoring (22.4) and rebounding (12.4) for two years. She finished her career as the conference's top scorer, rebounder, and with the highest scoring average. She was the

NCC's MVP for three straight seasons and was a *WDIIB* Player of the Year.

### **Runners Up:**

**Sarah McKinney, California** — The 2005 Women's Division II Bulletin Player of the Year was the first women's basketball player in PSAC history to win three divisional Athlete of the Year awards. For her career, she scored more than 2,000 points and grabbed more than 1,100 rebounds, both of which are school records.

**Celeste Trahan, Elizabeth City St.** — The 2008 Women's Division II Bulletin Player of the Year led the nation in scoring (23.7 ppg) and rebounding (15.9) and was in the top 25 in blocked shots (2.1

bpg) her senior year. She was named the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association MVP and also became the first Division II women's player in history to reach 2,000 career points and 1,500 rebounds.

**Katie Cezat, Hillsdale** — The 2009 Women's Division II Bulletin Player of the Year averaged 29.3 points and 16.8 rebounds per game her senior year, while leading the nation with 100 blocked shots and 333 field goals made. Her 521 rebounds are the second-most in a single season in Division II history, and she set a new national record with 28 double-doubles.

**Johannah Leedham, Franklin Pierce** — Two-time Preseason Player of the Year and three-time All-American dominated in the late 2000s.

## Best Final

Division II basketball has had some dramatic finishes, but for drama 2004 earns Best Championship Game:

Megan Storck hit a 3-pointer with 30 seconds left to help California of Pennsylvania win its first Division II women's title in a 75-72 victory over Drury.

Drury had a chance to tie the game, but Kara Rutledge's 3-point attempt fell short with three seconds left.

Drury overcame a 15-point deficit to take a two-point lead with 7:07 left. The Vulcans held a lead as big as 15 points in the second half with 12:35 remaining, but the Panthers came roaring back with a 19-2 run that gave them a 63-61 lead. Drury took a 72-71 lead with two free throws with 44.9 seconds to play, then came Storck's memorable shot that gave California the victory.

### What do you think?

Agree? Disagree? Let us know what you think of our Best of the 2000s selections.

Send us an email or DM on Twitter about the teams, coaches, players and games that you would add to our lists.

We want to hear from you!

## Best Team

While there were no unbeaten Division II women's teams during the decade, eight teams finished a season with a single loss.

Our vote for the best single-season team goes to California (Pa.) for its 2004 national championship squad that brought home a 35-1 record and the best single-season winning percentage of the decade.

### Runners Up:

**Florida Gulf Coast, 2007** — In its final season before heading to Division I, FGCU lost its only game (34-1) in the national final to Southern Connecticut.

**Washburn, 2005** — Finished the year with a 35-2 record and a national title.

**Grand Valley State, 2006** — Lakers finished with a 33-3 record, a school-record 22-game win streak to end the season, and the 2006 national championship.

**Delta State, 2008** — A single loss in the Elite Eight put the Lady Statesman at 33-1.

**So. Connecticut, 2007** — A national title and a 34-2 record, second most among national champs in the 2000s.

## Best Conference

**North Central Conference.** Even in its final years, the NCC sent four members to the national championship game and produced one title. It also had two WDIIB Players of the Year.

The NCC dominated the Best of the 1990s (see sidebar) as well.

## Biggest News

We've covered the number of teams that have made the move to Division I status many times on these pages. However, the loss of the North Central Conference after so many years of Division II participation (formed in 1922) cries out for recognition. Division II powerhouse teams like North Dakota, South Dakota, North Dakota State and South Dakota State left for Division I and left the league paralyzed. After years of trying to fill the void, the league ceased operations in 2008.

## Best of the 1990s

Since our debut in 1993, Women's Division II Bulletin has covered Division II basketball inside and out. The last time we put together a Best Of was for the 1990s.

Wondering what the Best Of the 1990s were? Here's a look back at our selections from the December, 1999, issue:

### Best Final:

1992 — Delta State upset host North Dakota State 65-63 in Fargo in front of 7,000 fans to win its third title in four years.

### Best Conference:

North Central Conference  
NCC members won eight Division II women's basketball championships and appeared in nine title games during the 1990s.

### Best Player:

Jenny Crouse, North Dakota. Led the Fighting Sioux to three straight national titles and set NCC record for points, rebounds, blocked shots and field goal percentage.

### Best Coach:

Amy Ruley, North Dakota St.

### Best Team:

North Dakota St., 1995, 32-0

### Best Program:

North Dakota  
North Dakota St.