

## **Vandals chosen by new tourney**

Monday, March 16, 2009

MOSCOW - The best season in 10 years is not yet over for the University of Idaho.

The Vandals surprised their fans Sunday by being selected for participation in the inaugural CollegeInsider.com postseason tournament (CIT).

Idaho will play host to Drake University at Memorial Gym at 7:05 p.m. Wednesday in the first round. The Vandals' portable court in the Kibbie Dome has been removed in preparation for the dome's renovation project.

A UI release announcing the selection Sunday night didn't mention its financial obligation, but teams in the tournament are generally required to pony up \$43,500 in order to play a host role

The 16-team CIT field is made up of schools with a relatively modest national profiles. Besides Idaho, the only other schools chosen from the West were Portland and Pacific, which meet Wednesday in the first round at Stockton, Calif.

"I can't express how excited I am for the players, coaches, and, most importantly, the fans who have waited 19 long years for a postseason game," Idaho coach Don Verlin said. "To be one of the handful of NCAA Division I basketball teams with the opportunity to continue its season is unbelievable."

Drake is a member of the Missouri Valley Conference.

The Vandals earned their best record since the 1998-99 season at 16-15. They placed third in the Western Athletic Conference with a 9-7 record, but were eliminated in the first round of the league tournament with an upset loss to Louisiana Tech.

"This is a huge accomplishment for our men's basketball program," Idaho athletic director Rob Spear said. "This selection for postseason play is a well-deserved honor based on the fantastic season for our team. All of the credit goes to coach Verlin and the players for their hard work and dedication to turning the program around."

Tickets will go on sale for \$10 apiece today through the University of Idaho ticket office (1-88-88-UIDAHO).

"First and foremost, this is big for our program," Idaho senior Terrence Simmons said. "It goes a long way to show how hard we worked this season and the

character of the guys in the locker room. We definitely deserve to be playing in the postseason after the season we had."

Idaho has not participated in a postseason tournament since an NCAA tournament berth in 1990. The Vandals were defeated in the opening round by Louisville at Salt Lake City, 78-59.

The CIT is a single-elimination tournament consisting of four rounds, with the first three rounds being played at on-campus sites. The championship game will be played at an on-campus site to be determined by seeding.

Quarterfinal games will be played on March 23 and semifinals will be two days later. The title game is set for March 31.

CIT first-round games

Tuesday

Rider (19-12) at Liberty (22-11)

Kent State (19-14) at Oakland (22-12)

Wednesday

The Citadel (20-12) at Old Dominion (21-10)

Mount St. Mary's (19-13) at James Madison (19-14)

Austin Peay (19-13) at Bradley (18-14)

Belmont (19-12) at Evansville (17-13)

Portland (19-12) at Pacific (19-11)

Drake (17-15) at Idaho (16-15)