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April 17, 1996

Contact: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181

Embargoed Until 6 a.m. (CDT), Thursday, April 18***Achtung! Football! June 3!*****IWU Titans to Play in Charity Bowl IV in Hamburg, Germany**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--It will be Monday Night Football, but Frank, Dan, and Al won't be in the broadcast booth when Illinois Wesleyan University's Titans play in Charity Bowl IV against the Hamburg Blue Devils in Germany on June 3.

A crowd of 10,000 is expected at Hamburg's Volksparkstadion for the 7:30 p.m. (German time) kickoff of the first Monday night game in the history of American football in Germany. The game also will be telecast throughout northern Germany by the Hamburg 1 television station.

The first three Charity Bowls raised about \$81,000 (DM 120,000) to support children's care programs, such as UNICEF, a United Nations children's fund, and Hamburg AIDs Care.

IWU has teamed up with International Sport, Inc., of Tallahassee, Fla., for the May 31-June 6 cultural exchange trip to Hamburg. International Sport brings foreign players to the United States and sends U.S. teams abroad on competitive tours.

"IWU's 52 football players making the trip will meet new international friends and colleagues," said Norm Eash, IWU head football coach, "while sharing experiences and discoveries that are a once in a lifetime opportunity."

To finance the trip to Germany, each IWU football player is raising \$1,099, which covers airfare, meals, hotel expenses, and visits to historical landmarks, including a tour of Hamburg and its historic harbor and a day trip to Berlin. The deadline for donations is April 19.

"Players are contacting friends, relatives, and businesses in their hometowns and elsewhere to raise the \$1,099 needed to cover trip costs," Eash said. "They're getting sponsors from organizations like Kiwanis and Rotary clubs, former teachers, and corporations. They're finding out that it's easy to raise money for a good cause. Most donations are in the \$50 to \$100 range."

Eash estimates that less than 10 percent of the 52 players making the trip have previously traveled overseas. He views the trip to Germany as a "great way for our football

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team to bond and become closer--that's one of the things a coach wants to develop in terms of team chemistry. It also will give me a chance to get a good look at our 1996 team and experiment with putting players in different positions."

U.S. Football in Europe

American football in Europe is a club sport with participants age 19 or older, Eash explained. American football is played in about 17 countries, where approximately 1,000 teams take the field. Every European nation has an American football federation. The top half dozen European teams come from Germany, Finland, France, Italy, England, and Holland, according to Eash.

American football is played in Europe in the spring so that the season doesn't clash with soccer, which is played in the fall. Most teams play a 10-12 game schedule, plus the playoffs in a season running from March to June. The Euro-Bowl, the championship contest, is played in July.

Club teams, Eash explained, can have five American players. However, only two Americans can be on the field at the same time, according to European rules.

The European Federation of American Football is the sport's governing body, establishing rules and a structure for the international playoff system. Games are governed by standard American collegiate football rules.

A system of national teams also exists in Europe. These teams only field players from their country unlike European Federation teams composed of international players. Some players participate on national and European Federation teams.

Teams use officials from their own country. No American officials are employed by the European Federation.

"Generally speaking," Eash said, "European officials are not experienced. They tend to throw a flag on virtually every down, taking the rules very literally. Finland is first country in Europe with a professional school for officials."

American football is gaining fans in Europe, Eash thinks, because of the Super Bowl.

"Europeans are intrigued by football," he said. "They watch the Super Bowl, even though it's on at 4 a.m., and they have Super Bowl parties. A Frenchman once told me that Europeans see football as a gladiator-type sport."

The Game Plan and Outlook

The Titans and Blue Devils have exchanged game films to scout each other. Eash

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also has viewed tape of last year's Charity Bowl.

When the Titans get to Germany, they'll get down to business right away with a practice on the night of their arrival.

"We'll be tired," Eash said, "but we're going to do it.

"I want the trip to be fun," he added, "but at the same time I want the team to be competitive--we're playing for the United States not just IWU, so there's some added pressure."

The Blue Devils, Eash pointed out, will be at the end of their season with about six games under their belt, while the Titans will not have played competitively since last fall. However, the Titans went 6-3 in 1995, finishing in second place with a 6-1 record in the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin (CCIW).

"Our number one strength," Eash said, "is our returning veterans and the overall intelligence of the team. Offensively, we have returning players at every position except at tight end. We have four or five offensive linemen returning and the players know the offense very well. It's a matter of brushing up, getting the cobwebs off. Our defense looks stronger than last season--we have some young players coming up who have experience. We have a balanced team."

Because of the short time the Titans will have to prepare for the game, Eash is planning to run a basic offense, but run it well.

"We'll have a limited number of plays to execute on offense," he said. "Our defense may be a little sharper because of the number of veterans."

Lon Erickson--IWU Quarterback

IWU's signal caller, Lon Erickson, will be making his first trip outside of the United States.

"I haven't seen the ocean," said Erickson, a junior majoring in business administration from Lake St. Louis, Mo.

By early April, Erickson had raised about \$400 toward his trip costs. He sent letters to relatives, his high school, and local businesses in St. Charles, Ill., where he lived until two years ago.

Erickson, a 5-foot, 11-inch, 190-pound quarterback, is concerned about getting his timing down with his receivers, remembering their routes, and working on handoffs to his running backs.

Erickson's scouting report on the Blue Devils is that the German team has good size

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and they're athletic. They lack some experience, but are rapidly improving with the Americans on the German squad providing good leadership.

His prediction for the game: a close contest with IWU bringing home a victory.

Looking forward to the 1996 campaign, Erickson sees the trip to Germany playing a pivotal role in cementing team unity. "We're going to be one of the teams to beat in the conference this year," predicts Erickson, who is a 1996 team co-captain. "We have a lot of experience and our goal is a national playoff berth."

In the 1995 campaign, Erickson played in all nine IWU games, attempting 304 passes, completing 166 passes for 2,115 yards. He threw 10 interceptions and 18 touchdowns. He completed 54.6 percent of his pass attempts, averaging 235 passing yards per game. His longest pass was a 74-yard strike.

Last season, Erickson was honored as a national "Offensive Player of the Week" in Division III football by *Don Hansen's Football Gazette* and *USA Today*. He received the honor for his effort in a 61-10 win over Chicago's North Park College. He completed 21 of 28 passes for 316 yards and tied an IWU record with six touchdown passes, while also rushing for 72 yards and a touchdown on 13 carries. His 388 total offense yards is the fourth best single-game effort in IWU history.

Erickson, who started playing football at age 7 in a Pop Warner-like league, is a business administration major, sporting a 3.94 grade-point average. He has a 4.0 grade-point average in his major subjects. A Dean's List student, he is a member of Phi Eta Sigma national scholastic honorary, campus fraternity board, student advisory board for the business/economics division, and had an article published in the 1995 IWU undergraduate economics journal.

The secret to juggling his student-athlete responsibilities is planning, according to Erickson.

"I sit down and schedule things," he explained, "since there are always slow periods and high periods of activity. I also know that I have to give up things like TV and movies and that I have to put in late nights."

Erickson is preparing for the trip to Germany in many ways. He's talked to his grandmother, Leona Erickson, who has been to Germany a few times. Friends have given him travel books.

"I'm planning to tap into the Internet for travel information," Erickson said.

Erickson, the business major, sees entertainment as a big U.S. export and this

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accounts for the growing success of American football in Europe.

Garrett Larkin--IWU Strong Safety

Garrett Larkin, a six-foot, four-inch, 220-pound strong safety, is facing his first trip overseas and only his second ride on an airplane.

Excited about the prospect of playing a top-notch European football team, Larkin raised his \$1,099 for trip in barely two weeks, utilizing local contacts when he was home in Des Plaines, Ill., over spring break. He approached family, friends, his former schools, and wrote letters to 20-25 businesses. Contributions ranged from \$25-\$400.

Larkin, a business administration major and 1996 team co-captain, assesses the Blue Devils this way: "They're big and physical. But they lack speed at the skill positions."

The veteran nature of the Titans, he sees as a big plus, especially on offense where the receiving corps and quarterback are all returning to the team.

On defense, where Larkin plays, he said: "Our quickness is our strength. We're not overly big, but even though our linebackers are young, they have experience. Our secondary is big and pretty physical."

Playing in the secondary last year, Larkin's season highlight came in a game against Millikin University of Decatur, Ill. He snatched two interceptions in a game where IWU came away with a 3-0 victory.

During the 1995 football season, Larkin played in all nine IWU games, making 29 tackles and assisting on 28 others. He had a season total of four interceptions, returning the snatches for 43 yards, including one 26-yard run.

The challenge for Larkin in playing strong safety is having to cover at least half of the field on any given play.

"I have to cover the wide receivers one-on-one," he said, "and they are quick, they come flying up the field, and I have to stop them."

Excitement is the key to football catching on in Europe, according to Larkin.

"Because the football season is shorter--nine games compared to 82 for professional basketball," he said, "each game means more and you have a week to prepare for each game."

His prediction for the Charity Bowl: Titans, 10-Blue Devils, 7.

Norm Eash--IWU Head Football Coach

Thirteen IWU football squads over the last 61 years have posted records of 75 percent or better and Norm Eash has been part of five of those teams--as a player in 1974

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and four times during his nine years as IWU's head football coach (1990, 1991, 1992, and 1994).

Eash began the 1995 football campaign with an overall record of 47-26-1 at IWU. The 1995 season brought another six victories and three defeats, including a 6-1 CCIW record.

Eash is IWU's second winningest coach behind Don Larsen, who chalked up 166 victories from 1954-86.

The 1994 Eash-coached squad shared the CCIW championship, while his 1992 team was 10-1, the first IWU football team to compete in the NCAA Division III playoffs.

Eash was named CCIW Coach of the Year in 1992.

An Eash-coached wide receiver, Chris Bisailon, class of 1993, tallied 56 career touchdown receptions at IWU, eclipsing Jerry Rice's all-NCAA mark of 50 passes caught for touchdowns at Mississippi Valley State University from 1981-84.

A native of Chenoa, Ill., Eash captained football and basketball teams and was a Little All-State football selection in 1970. He graduated in 1975 from IWU with a physical education degree. As an IWU football player, he was a starting defensive lineman as a sophomore and a starting offensive tackle during his last two seasons, playing on an 8-1 team in 1974 that tied for the CCIW title.

Eash earned a master's degree in educational administration from Illinois State University in Normal, Ill.

He taught physical education and was an assistant coach in football, basketball, and track at Streator (Ill.) High School from 1975-82. As head football coach and athletic director at Dwight (Ill.) High School, his gridiron teams compiled an overall record of 34-15, qualifying for the Illinois High School playoffs three times. He reached the Class 2A quarterfinals in 1983, when Eash was named "Kankakee Area Coach of the Year."

1987 marked his first season as IWU's head football coach.

The 1995 campaign saw IWU average 29.4 points per game, compared to 14.4 for their opponents. The Titans tallied 3,642 total net yards, compared to 2,379 for their opponents, averaging 404 yards per game and 5.3 yards per play. The Titans rushed for a season total of 1,386 yards on 367 attempts for an average of 3.8 yards per play and 154 yards per game. The Titans tallied 2,256 net passing yards, compared to 1,264 for their opponents in 1995. The Titans attempted 326 passes, completed 177, and suffered 11 interceptions. On average, the Titans threw for 250.7 yards per game and 12.7 yards per

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completion.

Hamburg Blue Devils

The Hamburg Blue Devils went 9-6-1 in the 1995 season, which was their first playing in the Bundesliga, a football league. They reached the German Bowl finals, meeting the Dusseldorf Panthers, the 1995 Euro-Bowl champs. The Blue Devils lost the German Bowl championship to Panthers, 17-10, in a game played in Braunschweig.

The Blue Devils began playing in August, 1992, with three games in the Schweppes Cool Masters tournament. They won the tournament by defeating the Manchester Spartans, 42-25.

The Blue Devils were an independent team in 1993, unaffiliated with any league. They played a dozen games against top European teams and two U.S. colleges, going undefeated. The Blue Devils wrapped up the 1993 season with a 53-30 victory over the Munich Cowboys, a top German team.

The 1994 season saw the Blue Devils playing in the Football League of Europe (FLE), making it to the championship game against the Stockholm Nordic Vikings. A crowd of 18,000 fans saw the Vikings defeat the Blue Devils, 43-35.

The Blue Devils are coached by 61-year-old George White, a veteran San Francisco area high school football coach with a record of 165-42-8. Over 20 years, he won 12 high school championships, was named Coach of the Year 10 times, and was elected into two high school halls of fame. White began his coaching and teaching career in 1961.

White is assisted by five coaches, three from the United States. His coaching staff includes:

- Chris Merrit, 26, defensive coordinator, from Indiana University.
- Tony Feliciano, 32, linebackers coach, from San Francisco State University.
- Paul Kling, 23, receivers coach, from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
- Dominik Cardoso, 30, defensive line coach, from Germany.
- Dragan Milasinovic, 22, running backs coach, from the University of the Redlands in California. Milasinovic is Serbian.

The Blue Devils top foreign players include five from the United States, two Italians, two Canadians, and two from Great Britain:

- Vince Palko, U.S., linebacker, Bowling Green State University (Ohio).
- Johnny Wright, U.S., fullback/tailback, University of Nevada.

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- Xavier Kairey, U.S., cornerback, University of Nevada.
- Paul Kling, U.S., wide receiver, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.
- Craig Pettigrew, U.S., Midwestern State University, Texas.
- Dino Buccioli, Italy, quarterback, Simon Fraser University (Canada).
- Biaggio Pepe, Italy, outside linebacker, Simon Fraser University (Canada).
- Mike Bromilow, Canada, defensive line, Simon Fraser University (Canada).
- Mike Williams, Canada, quarterback/wide receiver, Western Ontario (Canada).
- Simon Morris, Great Britain, wide receiver/cornerback, Simon Fraser University (Canada).
- Bruce Reid, Great Britain, fullback, Simon Fraser University (Canada).

The Blue Devils home field is the 61,000-seat, natural grass Volksparkstadion in Hamburg.

Charity Bowl

The Hamburg Blue Devils have played in the Charity Bowl since 1993, tallying a 1-3 record against U.S. college teams. Their lone victory came in 1995, when the Blue Devils defeated St. Xavier University of Chicago, 20-0.

The Blue Devils' Charity Bowl record is:

- 1993--Pacific Lutheran University (Washington state), 42, Blue Devils, 18.
Findlay Oilers (Ohio), 28, Blue Devils, 7.
- 1994--Findlay Oilers (Ohio), 21, Blue Devils, 14.
- 1995--St. Xavier University (Illinois), 0, Blue Devils, 20.

Illinois Wesleyan University

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,850 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition.

Editor's Note: For additional information and interviews with IWU football players and coaches about Charity Bowl IV, call: IWU Public Relations-News Services, 309/556-3181. To reach Norm Eash, IWU head football coach, call: 309/556-3344. The Hamburg Blue Devils can be reached at: Grosse Bahnstrasse 33, 22525 Hamburg, or by calling: 040/85359-0; FAX: 040/85259-181. Volksparkstadion is located at Sylvesterallee 7, 22525 Hamburg, and can be reached by calling: 040/837001. International Sport Inc., can be reached at 3201 E. Lakeshore Dr., Tallahassee, Fla. 32312, or by calling: 904/385-3241 (contact: Deborah Dunston).