

# 2002-2003 COLLEGE COACHES OF THE YEAR

## JAY SMITH MENS'

Central Michigan University

For a while it looked as if **Jay Smith** would be thrilled to lead Central Michigan to a winning season, but three years later the bar has been raised. Coach **Smith** has guided the Chippewas to two MAC titles in the past three seasons, along with an appearance in the NCAA tournament and expectations are growing. **Smith** came to Central Michigan after one very successful year at Grand Valley State in which he led the Lakers to a GLIAC title. Prior to leading the Lakers, **Smith** spent seven seasons as an assistant at Michigan, going to two National Championship games. The Chippewas were hoping he could bring his winning ways to their program. The first three seasons at Central were not ideal for Coach **Smith**, going 21-60 in that span, but his teams were known for their blue-collar work ethic on and off the court. Then the 2000-2001 season came and everything started to click for the Chippewas, as they won the MAC regular season title. Central hit a bump in the road the next season, but rebounded very well in 2002-2003, posting a 25-7 record; winning the MAC regular season title and won the conference tournament. They gained a trip to the NCAA tournament and defeated Creighton, the #15 team in the nation, before bowing to #7 Duke. Coach **Smith's** team set a school record for wins in a season this year with 25, and he was named MAC Coach of the Year for the second time in his career (the other in 2001). The Chippewas are looking forward to the next season, with both the MAC Player and Coach of the Year returning. It should be another exciting year.

## KRIS DUNBAR WOMENS'

Lake Superior State University

**Kris Dunbar** has returned to her alma mater and is doing great things for their women's basketball program. In her five years leading Lake Superior State, Coach **Dunbar** has compiled an 83-53 record, including two 20-win seasons. She is from the Upper Peninsula herself and has built her program using a lot of the local talent. This season the Lakers were 23-6 overall and 15-3 in the GLIAC. They won the GLIAC North and the GLIAC tournament to earn a trip to the NCAA tournament. The conference title and NCAA appearance were both the second time Coach **Dunbar's** teams had accomplished those tasks. This year's Laker team also led the nation in field goal percentage shooting a smoking 50.9%. Coach **Dunbar** began her coaching career as an assistant coach in Elmira College in New York. While she was there the Eagles won two ECAC Upstate New York Championships. In 1997, she returned to Lake Superior State and spent one year as an assistant before she became the head coach at the beginning of the 1998-1999 season. Coach **Dunbar** was named the GLIAC Coach of the Year in 2001-2002, as she led the Lakers to their first NCAA appearance in six years.

## GENE GIFFORD MENS' JR COLLEGE

Muskegon Community College

The 2002-2003 season was another excellent season in the 22 years that **Gene Gifford** has spent at Muskegon Community College. Coach **Gifford** guided the Jayhawks to a 21-8 record this season and a second place finish in the MCCA Eastern Western Conference. The team featured a potent offense that scored an average of 86.5 points per game, good enough for 9th in the nation. They team was also deadly from the line, shooting the 6th best percentage in the nation at 70.9%. The Jayhawks were ranked in the top 12 in the nation throughout the year. The last four years have been very good for Coach **Gifford**, who has compiled an 80-38 record including a conference championship. Coach **Gifford** began his coaching career at Alma College as an assistant back in 1973. He then moved on to Ravenna High School in 1977 and coached there until he began at Muskegon Community College in 1981. Coach **Gifford** has been named the Western Conference Coach of the Year twice and was a Coach of the Year finalist in the 1989-1990 season. Coach **Gifford** also played for the Jayhawks before moving on to Olivet College and then receiving his Masters from Central Michigan. He also serves as the schools athletic director and serves on several of the Western Conference committees.

## MARVIN ALLEN WOMENS' JR COLLEGE

Oakland Community College

The Oakland Community College Lady Raiders had a record-setting season behind the guidance of their coach, **Marv Allen**. The Lady Raiders posted a 24-7 record in Coach **Allen's** second season at the helm. The record was good enough for an MCCA Eastern Conference Championship, a first for the college. The team also captured the MCCA State Tournament Title, also a first for the school. Two important winning streaks highlighted this season, a ten-game winning streak in the middle of the season and then a six-game winning streak that ended in the Region XII semi-final game. Coach **Allen's** club was a perfect 11-0 at home this season and 5-0 on neutral courts. A highlight of the season was the team's trip to Arizona where they played three division two junior colleges, including the #2 ranked team in the nation. While Oakland only came away with one victory, the team played well and the trip was a nice springboard into their season and a key to their success. This season was the second for Coach **Allen** as the head coach for Oakland Community College. Before becoming the head coach, he was an assistant at Oakland for two years. He previously coached the girl's varsity team at Walled Lake Western high school for five years and spent time as an assistant for both the boys and the girls teams at Brighton High School. Coach **Allen** has accumulated a 38-21 record while at Oakland.