

The Iowa Women's Softball League has grown tremendously in just a single year. And there's no end in sight.

The rosters, schedules and coaching staff were announced today with the season opener just 19 days away on June 3.



There are 78 players in the league, compared to 52 on Opening Day a year ago, an increase of exactly 50 percent.

There are now two divisions in the IWSL instead of only one, with the Central Division in Indianola joining the Eastern Division in Cedar Rapids.

There are now five teams instead of four. And there's a general buzz in college softball about the only summer league in Iowa.



There are three teams in the Eastern Division with Hawkeye Convenience Stores, Ironside Apparel and Emil's Hideaway. And after playing its games at Kirkwood Community College and Coe College last year, the Eastern Division is moving to the new Busse Field at Mount Mercy University with its field turf, concession stand and modern conveniences.

There are two teams in the Central Division with Bosch Financial and the Metro Sports Report. They will play all their games at Simpson College in Indianola.

The goal is to have four teams in both divisions in 2019, and if the current growth rate continues it should be within reach.

The 78 players in the league attend 36 different colleges in 10 different states with schools in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, South Dakota, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Florida, West Virginia and Mississippi.

There is a nice mixture of players from NCAA, NAIA and Junior College schools, including 16 players from NCAA Division I programs at UNI, Minnesota, Illinois State, Western Illinois, South Dakota State, Western Kentucky and Marshall University.




The league also has a number of former Cedar Rapids metro prep standouts. Former Cedar Rapids Prairie standouts Natalie Halvorson (Kirkwood), Lauren Kuch (Kirkwood) and Haley McFarlane (St. Cloud State) along with ex-Linn-Mar player Morgan Braughton (Mount Mercy) will play for Ironside Apparel.

Jefferson's three representatives, Erin Kuba (Indian Hills), Emily Oler (Mount Mercy) and Avery Guy (DMACC) are on the Emil's Hideaway roster, as is former Linn-Mar standout Maddy Ryan (Coe) and ex-Kennedy player Megan Weber (Coe).

The Hawkeye Convenience Store roster includes ex-Kennedy players Jenna Schwartzhoff (Clarke), Tianna Drahn (Northern Iowa) and Paige Timmerman (Luther) along with former Washington player Payton Bruner (Mount Mercy) and Xavier graduate Erin Drahozal (Upper Iowa).

All the games will be played on Sundays on June 3-10-17-24 and July 8-15-22-29. Each team will play two games on Sundays for a 16-game schedule.

The Hawkeye Convenience Stores are the title sponsor for the Iowa Women's Softball League.