

2016 MIAC Men's Golf Championship Preview

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COON RAPIDS, Minn. – Recently the world learned what the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) has known for a while – nothing beats dramatic October golf in Minnesota.

A week after the state was the focus of the golf world while playing host to the Ryder Cup, there is another major high-stakes event ready to tee off, as the 2016 MIAC Men's Golf Championships begin Saturday and run through Monday at Bunker Hills Golf Course in Coon Rapids, Minn. And, if last year's tournament is any indication, final-day drama and outstanding performances are definitely in the forecast.

A year ago, the race for the men's conference title – and the automatic bid to the NCAA Championships – wasn't just close, it was historic. Augsburg College held off St. Thomas by a single shot – 895 to 896 – to give the Auggies the title exactly 20 years since their last MIAC championship. Augsburg shot a blistering 292 on day one and held enough of a cushion to hold off a final-day charge from the Tommies, who carded a 296 over the final 18 holes, in one of the most memorable finishes in MIAC golf history.

Both Bethel and Gustavus were tied for third just six shots back of Augsburg (901) to give the MIAC an extremely formidable top four in 2015. Saint John's (914) edged Concordia (915) for another one-shot margin to grab the final spot in the top five. St. Olaf (932) was seventh, Carleton (951) was eighth, Macalester (980) finished ninth and Saint Mary's (995) rounded out the 2015 men's standings.

This season, the MIAC has three teams in the Top 25 and a fourth receiving votes in the national polls, so these teams picked up right where they left off. St. Thomas leads the way at No. 11 in the Golf Coaches Association of America (GCAA) poll with Saint John's at No. 16 and Gustavus ranked 25th. Saint Mary's also received votes in the latest poll.

The fall season has seen several outstanding performances, with five teams averaging less than 310 shots per round. Saint John's leads the way with an average of 299.9, with Gustavus (301.8) less than two shots behind the Johnnies. Augsburg (304.6), St. Thomas (306.3) and Bethel (309.3) make up the rest of the top five in 2016 scoring average. Concordia has the sixth-best average of 314.8 and Saint Mary's and St. Olaf both average an even 318 shots per round, with Carleton (326) and Macalester (333.5) rounding out the statistical ranking.

The team success is powered by the individual star power shining throughout the MIAC. St. Thomas' Pete Sienko is back to defend his MIAC Championships individual title and he was also named the conference Player-of-the-Year in 2015-16. This season, Sienko's 76.6 average ranks 13th heading into the MIAC meet. Gustavus' Max Savini was named Rookie-of-the-Year in 2015-16 and was an All-Conference honoree, and he's tied for sixth this fall with a 75.6 average.

Including Sienko and Savini, nine of the 15 All-Conference golfers are back from a season ago. Defending champ Augsburg brings back All-Conference performers Michael Barrette and Brett Gaustad. Gaustad's 73.9 average leads the MIAC this fall, and Barrette (77.1) also ranks in the top 20. Gustavus' Chris Captain earned All-MIAC honors last season and has the second-best scoring average in 2016 at 74.2.

Bethel brings back Alex Case and Grant Exsted for their senior seasons after All-MIAC accolades in 2015-16, with Exsted's 75.3 average ranking fourth in the MIAC. Saint John's star Ryan Gallagher returns with a 75.7 average to rank eighth in the league this fall, and Concordia's Cade Montplaisir is back atop the Cobber lineup with a 76.2 average after All-Conference honors a year ago as well to round out the returning All-MIAC players.

The Johnnies have gotten great performances from Mack Farley (74.4, third), Austin Kottke (75.5, fifth) and Sam Olson (76.0, ninth) this fall en route to the league's best team average. Gustavus also has two other top-10 golfers entering the MIAC Championships in Alec Aunan (75.6, sixth) and Ben Hauge (76.2, 10th).

St. Thomas hopes Emmet Herb (76.5) and Shane Sienko (76.9) can continue their solid fall seasons, Augsburg's title defense hopes are bolstered by the play of Brett Buckingham (77.0) and Dakota Krech (77.2) and Bethel has Noah Bragg (76.8) in the lineup to help its chances. Concordia and first-year Head Coach Joe Christianson hopes Nathaniel and Blake Kahlbaugh can supplement Montplaisir's leadership.



There are plenty of other names around the league to watch as well. Carleton will be led by Perry Strong, who enters the MIAC meet with a team-best 77.8 average, and David Perl is coming off a second-place finish in his last meet. Chris Winge is again St. Olaf's top golfer; he led the team in scoring last year and averages 78.3 shots per round to lead the way again in 2016. Hank Grunau (78.7) enters the MIAC meet with the Oles' second-best average. Macalester's Jack Buan (78.0) and Drew Gumlia (78.3) lead the Scots into this season's MIAC Championships, and Saint Mary's will look to Blair Sanders (78.4) and Kyle Brodt (78.6) to lead the way at the conference meet.

The three-day, 54-hole MIAC Golf Championships will tee off Saturday at 10:30 a.m. at Bunker Hills. Sunday's second round will also tee off at 10:30 a.m., and Monday's final round will tee off at 9 a.m. Spectators are welcome to attend and there is no admission fee, and spectators are encouraged to read and follow the tournament's [spectator rules](#).

There will be a short awards ceremony following Monday's final round to honor the top teams and individuals. The championship team will receive the MIAC championship plaque, as well as the conference's automatic bid to the 2017 NCAA Division III Golf Championships. The top 10 individual finishers will be named to the All-Championship team, and will be automatically eligible for All-Conference honors in the spring.

Fans who can't make the trip to Coon Rapids can follow all the action on the [MIAC Golf Championships web site](#), which will include [unofficial hole-by-hole live scoring updates](#), results, pairings, tee times, recaps, photos and more. Fans can interact on social media throughout the tournament on the MIAC's [Facebook](#) page, [Instagram](#) or on [Twitter](#) using the hashtag [#MIACgolf](#). The [MIAC's YouTube channel](#) also includes a [promotional video](#) for the event.

FOLLOW THE ACTION

There are numerous ways fans that aren't traveling to Coon Rapids can follow all the action throughout the tournament. The MIAC has enhanced its (unofficial) live scoring, and now offers hole-by-hole updates through Golfstat's live scoring system. Fans will easily be able to track team and individual progress throughout all three rounds.

The MIAC has a championship home page for the event, that will serve as the online home of the tournament. The championship page will include tee times, pairings and results as they become available, as well as recaps, photos and more.

| [Championship Home Page](#) | [Men's Live Scoring](#) |

[MIAC GOLF CHAMPIONSHIPS PROMOTIONAL VIDEO](#)

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TEAM-BY-TEAM PREVIEWS

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AUGSBURG | [Auggies' men's golf home page](#) |

Head Coach

- Eric Rolland (3rd season)

A Year Ago

- MIAC Champions | Score: 895

In the 2016 Postseason

- 26th/41 at NCAA Division III National Championships; Brett Gaustad 55th/210 as individual.

Players to Watch

- Brett Gaustad (SR | Team-leading 73.9 stroke average, currently best stroke average among MIAC golfers; top-10 finishes in all 4 events so far this fall; .956 (351-16) win-loss percentage; t-5th place at 2015 MIAC Championships, t-19th in 2014 and t-18th in 2013; 75.6 stroke average in 74 career rounds.)
- Michael Barrette (SR | No. 3 on team in scoring with 77.1 stroke average and .730 (268-99) win-loss percentage, 19th among MIAC golfers in stroke average; 2nd place at 2015 MIAC Championships, t-22nd in 2014 and t-26th in 2013; 77.9 stroke average in 77 career rounds.)
- Dakota Krech (SO | No. 4 on team in scoring with 77.2 stroke average and .760 (279-88) win-loss percentage, 20th among MIAC golfers in stroke average; t-19th at 2015 MIAC Championships; 76.6 stroke average in 33 career rounds.)

Did You Know?

- Augsburg won the MIAC championship for the third time in school history in 2015 and first time since 1995. Augsburg coach Eric Rolland, a 1997 alumnus, was a member of the 1995 conference championship squad and was on teams that reached NCAA national tournament competition in 1995, 1996 and 1997.



BETHEL | [Royals' men's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Tony Weber (6th season)

A Year Ago

- T-3rd place | Score: 901

Players to Watch

- Alex Case (Sr. | Two-time MIAC All-Conference, 78.3 average, four events)
- Grant Exsted (Sr. | 2015 MIAC All-Conference, 75.3 average, four events, two Top 10 finishes)
- Noah Bragg (So. | 76.8 average, four events, one Top 10 finish)

Did You Know?

- Bethel's men's golf team has finished among the Top 3 teams in the last three years, highlighted by a MIAC Championship in 2014.



CARLETON | [Knights' men's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Jerry Ericksen (9th season)

A Year Ago

- 8th place | Score: 951

Players to Watch

- Perry Strong (Jr.) Only Knight to be in the lineup at all five events so far this fall; posting a career-best 77.8 scoring average this season)
- David Bae (Jr. | Career average of 79.9 strokes is tied for tops among active players; turned in top performance among team's returners at last year's conference championships)
- Jeff You (Jr. | owns a team best 77.0 scoring average this season)

Did You Know?

- Sophomore David Perl was named the MIAC Golfer-of-the-Week for his performance as last Saturday's Viking Invite. Perl's career-best round totaled 73 strokes (+1) and led the Knights to the team victory in the 11-team field. Perl was the Knights' first Golfer-of-the-Week since Sept. 2007.

CONCORDIA | [Cobbers' men's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Joe Christianson (1st season)



A Year Ago

- 6th place | Score: 915

Players to Watch

- Cade Montplaisir (Sr. | 2015 MIAC All-Conference; finished in a tie for third at last year's MIAC Meet; leads the team in scoring in 2016 with a 76.2 average)
- Nathaniel Kahlbaugh (So. | No.3 golfer for Concordia at the 2015 MIAC Meet; second on the team in scoring average in 2016 at 78.4))
- Blake Kahlbaugh (Fr. | Third on the team in scoring this year with a 78.7 average; fired a season-best 72 in the 1st round of the Twin Cities Classic last week)

Did You Know?

- Freshman Blake Kahlbaugh won the Minnesota State High School Class A championship last year by shooting a 2-round total of 138 at the Pebble Creek GC. His final total was the second lowest of any golfer in all three of the boys' divisions.



GUSTAVUS | [Gusties' men's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Scott Moe (20th season)

A Year Ago

- T-3rd place | Score: 901

Players to Watch

- Chris Captain (Jr. | 2015-16 All-Conference ... 74.2 average ... four top-10 finishes in four events ... took fifth at NCAA Fall Preview)
- Max Savini (So. | 2015-16 Freshman of the Year ... 75.6 average ... one top-10 finishes in four events)
- Alec Aunan (Jr. | took third at the Twin Cities Classic, including a career-low round of 67 on day one ... 75.6 average ... two top-10 finishes in four events)

Did You Know?

- Gustavus's new state-of-the-art Drenttel Golf Facility is in its second year of use. Located on the northwest corner of campus and designed by Minnesota-based architectural firm TKDA, the 2,650-square foot Drenttel Golf Facility features three heated hitting bays that open to an outdoor driving range, a putting green, space designated for a golf simulator and new video analysis equipment, a team lounge and full restrooms.



MACALESTER | [Scots' men's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Tucker Weisman (1st season)

A Year Ago

- 9th place | Score: 980

Players to Watch

- Drew Gumlia (Sr. | 78.0 average; 31st in 2015)
- James Meyerson (Sr. | Holds school record for low round of 70)
- Jack Buan (Jr. | 78.0 average; 38th in 2015)

Did You Know?

- Drew Gumlia shot the team's lowest round of 72 in the second round of the Augsburg Fall Invite.



SAINT JOHN'S | [Johnnies' men's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Bob Alpers (24th season)

A Year Ago

- 5th place | Score: 914 (+50)

Golfers to Watch

- Mack Farley (Sr. | Leads the team with a 74.4 scoring average in 11 rounds this season and a 73.6 average in the last 19 rounds going back to last spring...outside of the Division I Gopher Invitational, Farley has a 73.1 stroke average in eight rounds this fall, and 72.9 in his last 16...2016 GCAA All-Region...2016 CoSIDA Academic All-American...2016 CoSIDA Academic All-District...2016 GCAA All-America Scholar...2015 and 2016 Academic All-MIAC)
- Ryan Gallagher (Sr. | Is third on the team with a 75.7 stroke average in 11 rounds this fall...2013-14 MIAC Freshman of the Year...2014-15 and 2015-16 All-MIAC...2015 NCAA Division III Championship participant...2015 GCAA All-America honorable mention...2015 and 2016 GCAA All-Region)
- Austin Kottke (Jr. | Is second on the team with a 75.5 stroke average in 11 rounds this fall...has a 74.2 average in his last 19 rounds going

back to last spring...carded a 68 (-3) at the second round of the Division I Gopher Invitational Sept. 3)

Did You Know?

- Last year's fifth-place finish at the MIAC Championship was SJU's first outside of the top three in the past 17 seasons.



SAINT MARY'S | [Cardinals' men's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Greg Moore (2nd season)

A Year Ago

- 10th place | Score: 995

Players to Watch

- Blair Sanders (Freshman | Owns a team-best 78.44 scoring average. ... Has posted seven rounds of 79 or better, including season-best two-over-par 74. ... Has played all nine competitive rounds for the Cardinals this season. ... Recorded first career hole-in-one at Augsburg Invitational on Sept. 4.)
- Kyle Brodt (Sophomore | Second on team with 78.56 scoring average. ... Owns rounds of 79 or better, including a team-best one-over-par 72 at Tim Kopka Memorial Tournament on Sept. 10. ... Has played all nine competitive rounds for the Cardinals this season.)
- David Iten (Senior | Third on team with a 79.89 scoring average. ... Owns three rounds of 79 or better, including team-best one-over-par 72 at Tim Kopka Memorial Tournament on Sept. 10. ... One of only three Cardinals to play all nine competitive rounds for Saint Mary's this season)

Did You Know?

- The Cardinals tied the school record with a second-day 297 at the Tim Kopka Memorial Tournament, getting one-over-par 72 from Kyle Brodt and David Iten, a four-over 75 from Blair Sanders, and a seven-over 78 from Hunter Rau.



ST. OLAF | [Oles' men's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Glen Peterson (12th season)

A Year Ago

- 7th place | 932 points

Players to Watch

- Phillip Boldt (Junior)
- Chris Winge (Senior)
- Hank Grunau (Sophomore)

Did You Know?

- Coach Glen Peterson was the MIAC conference runner up for St. Olaf in 1977-79 and captained the Oles to a conference championship.



ST. THOMAS | [Tommies' men's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Scott Proshek (7th season)

A Year Ago

- 2nd place | Score: 896

In the 2016 Postseason

- T-5th NCAA Championships, 72 hole score: 1,211

Players to Watch

- Pete Sienko (Jr. | 2015 All-America, MIAC Player of the Year, MIAC meet medalist)
- Emmet Herb (Fr. | 76.5 stroke average this fall, 12th of 92 at elite Golfweek Tourney)
- Riley Gannon (Jr. | Tie for 14th at 2015 MIACs; 10th of 92 at elite 2016 Golfweek Tourney)

Did You Know?

- An average of just 1.3 strokes separate the Toms' first six players through four fall tournaments, and 2.5 strokes per round separate the top nine players.