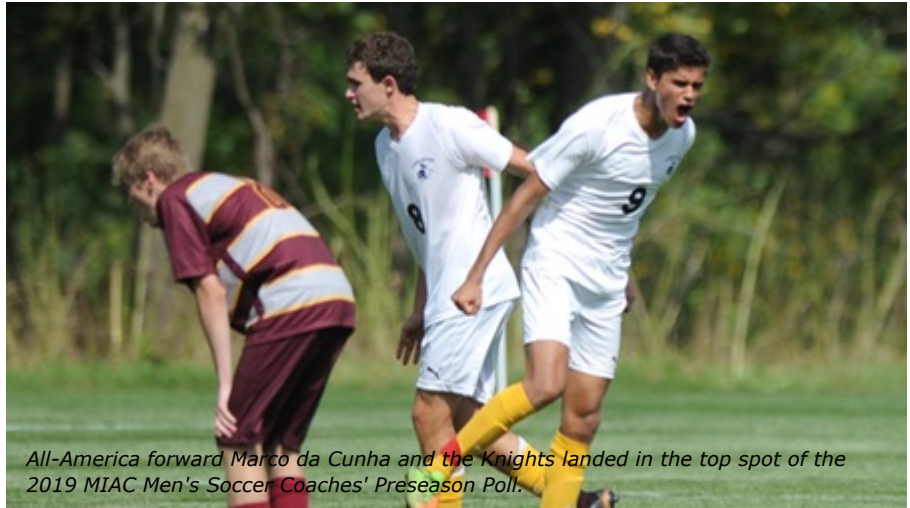


2019 MIAC Men's Soccer Preview and Preseason Coaches' Poll

Posted: Aug 28, 2019

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – The Carleton Knights are picked to win the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) men's soccer title in 2019 after receiving 91 points and five first-place votes in the league's annual Preseason Coaches' Poll, released on Wednesday.

Carleton's 2018 campaign included a 16-match unbeaten streak stretching over nearly two months and culminating in a MIAC Playoff championship and an automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament. The Knights - who have reached the conference playoffs in a MIAC-best 12 consecutive seasons - finished the year with a 16-2-3 record, one victory shy of the program record. Despite graduating 2018 MIAC Player of the Year Mark Roth, Carleton returns several key pieces from last year's squad, including All-America forward **Marco da Cunha**, who was one of only five first-year players in all of NCAA Division III to earn All-America accolades last season. The Knights received votes in the United Soccer Coaches' preseason Top 25 Poll and will open the 2019 campaign with six non-conference matches before welcoming Bethel to Bell Field for the start of the MIAC slate on September 18.



All-America forward Marco da Cunha and the Knights landed in the top spot of the 2019 MIAC Men's Soccer Coaches' Preseason Poll.

St. Thomas received four first-place votes and 85 total points to come in at No. 2 in the MIAC Preseason Coaches' Poll. The Tommies went 16-4-2 in 2018, finishing the year in the Sweet 16 round of the NCAA Tournament. St. Thomas will begin 2019 ranked No. 12 in the country and is set to take on a pair of top-20 teams in 2019, with matchups scheduled against No. 3 Chicago and No. 8 Luther to open September. Though the Toms graduated three All-Region selections from last year's squad, several key contributors are expected back this fall, including rising sophomore defender **Jack Barry**, who joined Carleton's da Cunha as the only first-year players to receive All-MIAC status in 2018. Barry booted in seven goals and assisted on three more in his debut season at St. Thomas last year.

The defending MIAC regular season champion Gustavus Gusties also received 85 points in the preseason balloting but were edged by the Tommies in poll positioning based on total first-place votes. In Tudor Flintham's first year as head coach, the Gusties earned their MIAC-record 15th regular season title, along with the program's 12th NCAA Tournament appearance. Forward **Matthew Gibbons** played a large role in that success last season, earning Second Team All-America honors after leading the MIAC with 25 points on seven goals - four game-winners - and 11 assists. Gibbons was also instrumental in the game-winning goal to clinch the MIAC championship at Macalester with a free kick assist. Gibbons and the Gusties will face eight non-conference opponents during the regular season, including 2018 NCAA Tournament qualifier Wis.-Superior to close out the month of September.

Macalester is No. 4 in the Poll after receiving 76 points in the preseason balloting. The Scots wrapped up 2018 ranked eighth in the North Region with a record of 11-6-3 overall and just missed out on the regular season MIAC title, falling to Gustavus in a 1-0 overtime heartbreaker to close out the 2018 conference schedule. The Scots have plenty of reason for optimism heading into 2019, however, as statement-making opportunities will be plentiful with eight of the team's 17 contests coming against 2018 NCAA Tournament qualifiers. Macalester is set to open the season at home against No. 3-ranked Chicago, followed by two more non-conference home matchups against NCAA Tournament qualifier Wis.-Superior and No. 8 Luther the following week and the non-conference capper against Carthage on September 15. Two-time All-MIAC defender **Max Kent** will be back to provide senior leadership in 2019, after logging more than 1,500 minutes on the field last season.

Augsburg picked up 68 points in the preseason balloting to come in at No. 5 in the Poll. The Auggies went 12-4-4 overall and 6-2-2 in conference action last season, the team's best record since the 2010 campaign. Augsburg also reached the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2010, bringing the MIAC's total number of men's soccer national qualifiers in 2018 to four. Greg Holker's club has recorded eight or more wins in 11 of the last 13 seasons and aims to raise that number to 12 in 2019, particularly with a pair of All-America selections returning to the lineup. Senior defender **Daniel Hedstrom** and senior goalkeeper **Garrett Kaelin** received All-America accolades from the United Soccer Coaches and D3soccer.com, respectively, after standout junior campaigns that led to a MIAC-best 0.57 goals-allowed average in conference play last season. The Auggies will face national tournament qualifiers in two of their first four matches of the season with Pacific Lutheran and Wis.-Superior scheduled for the first week of the year.

Saint John's went 8-7-1 overall in 2018, just missing out on a seventh consecutive MIAC Playoff berth. The Johnnies - whose postseason fate has been determined in the regular season finale each of the last three seasons - will look to rebound and return to the conference tournament in 2019. Rising senior **Leighton Lommel**'s availability will go a long way in helping achieve those goals this season. The All-Conference midfielder scored two goals and assisted on another in seven conference games before his season ended prematurely due to a torn Achilles late in the year. SJU will play four non-conference contests before the MIAC slate of games begins in September with three more uncommon opponents sprinkled throughout the second half of the year, including a matchup with 2018 NCAA Tournament qualifier Wis.-Superior in late October.

Hamline has reached the MIAC Playoffs three of the last four seasons and is set up well for a fourth in the last five with 20 men from the 2018 playoff squad returning to the team in 2019. Five of those players from the 7-7-1 2018 team will be seniors in 2019, including two-time All-Region forward **Adam King**, who topped all Pipers with 16 points on five goals and six assists last season. HU will have four games

under its belt before the conference schedule begins in September, with the program's first big test of the season coming on the road against Wis.-Superior in early September.

St. Olaf is set to play 11 of the team's 18 games at home in 2019, including five of its first six. That home-field advantage may prove significant, as the Oles are set to square off with six teams that appeared in the NCAA Tournament last season, including back-to-back non-conference contests against Luther and Carthage in September. Rising junior **Will Douglas** will likely play a large role in the Oles' offense again this season after leading the team in both goals (5) and points (13) as a sophomore last year.

Saint Mary's ended the 2018 campaign on a high note by shutting out conference foe Concordia, 2-0, in the regular season finale. **Josh Balsiger** scored his team-best seventh goal of the year in the win, capping an outstanding junior season that the Cardinals hope will continue on through 2019. Balsiger scored a combined four goals in his first two seasons at Saint Mary's before becoming the Cards' go-to-guy last year when he accounted for five of the team's 10 goals in conference play. Saint Mary's opens 2019 with six non-conference matches, with games against Marian, Carroll, and Central set to be played at home.

Bethel opened the 2018 season with a dramatic overtime victory and registered a big win over MIAC playoff-bound Hamline on the road last October. The Royals will look to replicate that excitement heading into 2019 with several returning players, including **Brandon Martinez-Luhman** back in the lineup. Martinez-Luhman contributed the game-winning goal in the Royals' season opener against Northwestern. BU will face five NCAA Tournament qualifying teams in 2019, including a non-conference matchup with Wis.-Superior on September 11.

Concordia went 6-2 in non-conference action last season and is set to face seven of the same opponents in 2019, including national tournament qualifier Wis.-Superior, who narrowly defeated the Cobbers, 2-1, last September. Concordia will have to adjust to life without All-MIAC defender Austin Peterson, who signed a contract with a professional club in Germany following his outstanding senior season last year, but returns **Aronah Mukhtar** to the lineup after leading the Cobbers with seven goals and 17 points in 2018.

Complete 2019 Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (10 for first, 9 for second, etc.) Teams are ranked in order of highest point total to lowest with vote totals listed and first-place votes shown in parentheses.

2019 MIAC Men's Soccer Preseason Coaches' Poll

Rank	Institution (First-Place Votes)	Total
1.	Carleton (5)	91
2.	St. Thomas (4)	85
3.	Gustavus (2)	85
4.	Macalester	76
5.	Augsburg	68
6.	Saint John's	49
7.	Hamline	44
8.	St. Olaf	42
9.	Saint Mary's	31
10.	Bethel	19
11.	Concordia	15

2019 MIAC Men's Soccer Playoffs

The 2019 MIAC Men's Soccer Playoffs will feature the Conference's top six teams from the regular season in a single-elimination, high-seed host tournament. The top two seeds receive byes to the semifinals, while teams seeded No. 3-6 will square off in the quarterfinals. The two quarterfinal games will take place Tuesday, November 5, followed by the two semifinal games on Wednesday, November 6, and the playoff championship on Saturday, November 9. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2019 NCAA Division III Men's Soccer Tournament.

Odds and Ends

-St. Olaf will have a first-year head coach for the first time in three decades, as **Travis Wall** takes over for Kurt Anderson, who retired last November after 30 seasons on the Oles' sideline. A former NCAA Division III National Player of the Year, Wall comes to St. Olaf after four seasons on the staff at his alma mater, Ohio Wesleyan University, where he played and coached under Jay Martin, the winningest coach in NCAA men's soccer history.

-Seven All-Region selections from the MIAC in 2018 (Augsburg's **Daniel Hedstrom**, **Lionel Vang**, and **Garrett Kaelin**, Carleton's **Marco da Cunha**, Gustavus' **Matthew Gibbons**, Hamline's **Adam King**, and Macalester's **Max Kent**) will be back on the pitch in 2019. Three of those men - Hedstrom, Kaelin, and da Cunha - were All-America honorees as well.

-Only 14 men on record have been named First Team All-MIAC in all four years of their eligibility. Augsburg's **Lionel Vang** has the chance to become the 15th in 2019, having earned All-Conference recognition in each of his first three seasons as an Auggie. Hamline's **Adam King** and Macalester's **Max Kent** will look to become three-time All-MIAC picks, a feat achieved by only 66 men on record.

For the Record

The MIAC continues to overhaul its sport record books to provide a better historical perspective of the Conference and the accomplishments of its student-athletes over the last century. The 33-page MIAC Men's Soccer Record Book contains annual Conference championship information, year-by-year standings, all-time award winners, individual records, and more. The information included in the 2019 Record Book is based on available data and research for additional historical documents is ongoing. The 2019 MIAC Men's Soccer Record Book is now available for download [here](#).

Celebrating a Century

The MIAC will celebrate its 100-year anniversary throughout the 2019-20 season. The conference's Centennial celebration will highlight the many outstanding moments, memories, and individuals who helped build the MIAC over the last century. Initiatives will include student-athlete, coach, and administrator spotlights, historical photos showcasing the evolution of MIAC sports and teams through the years, recognition of former MIAC student-athletes who continued their time in the conference as coaches and administrators, and more. The official #MIAC100 webpage will be housed at <https://www.miacathletics.com/miac100>.