

# Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference



## MIAC announces 2023 Softball Awards

Softball

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**BLOOMINGTON, Minn.** – The Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) announced the 2023 MIAC Softball Awards on Tuesday, including the All-Conference and honorable mention Teams, All-Playoff Team, and Player, Pitcher, Rookie, and Coach of the Year honors.

Saint Benedict senior **Gabby Spencer** was named MIAC Player of the Year, while Bethel senior **Kayla Simacek** received MIAC Pitcher of the Year honors. Both players also won the awards in 2022 as well. Saint Benedict first-year pitcher **Ellie Peterson** was selected as the MIAC Rookie of the Year, and Bethel's **Penny Foore** was honored by her peers with MIAC Softball Coach of the Year distinction for the second season in a row.

Spencer (St. Paul, Minn. | Roseville) was named MIAC Player of the Year for the second straight season. Spencer led the conference in on-base percentage with a mark of 0.560 in 2023 and ranked among the top-five in the conference in every major batting statistic. She hit 0.464 in 22 conference games, collecting 32 hits and driving home 17 runs. Spencer belted 10 extra-base hits and crossed home plate 21 times herself on the season. She is the first two-time recipient of the MIAC Player of the Year award since Angie Jackson was selected for a second time in 2015. Spencer is also the first repeat selection for the MIAC Player of the Year award since St. Thomas' Maria Bye was it in back-to-back seasons in 2007 and 2008.

Simacek (Hastings, Minn.) was named MIAC Pitcher of the Year for the second consecutive season after leading the conference in every major pitching category. Simacek won a MIAC-record 20 games in 2023, posting an earned-run average of 0.81 over 129.1 innings in the circle. She struck out 168 MIAC batters and tossed 17 complete games, with both figures representing the fourth-most in a single season in league history. Simacek is the first two-time recipient of the MIAC Pitcher of the Year award since St. Olaf ace Julie Graf won her second conference honor in 2021, and she is the first back-to-back winner of the award since St. Thomas' Kendra Bowe won three in a row from 2012-14.

Peterson (St. Anthony Village) received MIAC Rookie of the Year honors after posting an 8-3 record in the circle for the MIAC runner-up Bennies in 2023. Peterson struck out 56 batters and held opponents to a 0.187 batting average with two shutouts in her eleven starts. Her 2.28 ERA ranked fourth-lowest among all MIAC pitchers this season. Peterson is the third Bennie in the last four seasons to be named MIAC Rookie of the Year, joining Ally Hjort (2018) and teammate Bryn Carlstrom (2021).

Foore (8th season) collected her second straight MIAC Coach of the Year honor after leading the Royals to an undefeated regular season and back-to-back regular season conference championships. She is now the sixth MIAC softball coach to win at least two consecutive Coach of the Year honors since 1995 and is the first since current Saint Mary's head coach John Tschida won two in a row while at St. Thomas in 2018 and 2019.

In addition to individual awards, MIAC coaches also selected 36 players All-Conference with 14 more receiving honorable mention distinction. All awards were nominated by and voted on by the 12 MIAC head softball coaches and only statistics from regular season MIAC contests were considered for conference honors; any nominated player not selected as All-Conference but still receiving votes from at least three coaches was named honorable mention.

Seventeen of the 36 All-Conference selections in 2023 are repeat honorees, including Bethel outfielder **Allie Fauth-Kilgore**, who became the first player in conference history to earn five All-Conference honors in softball (2018-19-21-22-23). St. Olaf outfielder **Tara DeCroock** became the 25th four-time honoree in conference history, while Bethel outfielder **Lexi DeBace** and pitcher **Kayla Simacek**, Gustavus outfielder **Madi Mueller**, Saint Benedict outfielder **Gabby Spencer** and pitcher **Elly Novak**, and St. Catherine outfielder **Taylor Brunn** all earned their third All-MIAC nod – a feat achieved by 85 players in MIAC softball history.

The MIAC also announced the All-Playoff Team for softball, which recognized the top 13 performers from the conference tournament, as selected by playoff-participant head coaches.

## 2023 MIAC Softball Awards

### 2023 MIAC Softball Player of the Year

Position	Name	Institution	Class	Hometown   High School	Previous Selections
OF	Gabby Spencer	Saint Benedict	Sr.	St. Paul, Minn.   Roseville	2022

### 2023 MIAC Softball Pitcher of the Year

Position	Name	Institution	Class	Hometown   High School	Previous Selections
P	Kayla Simacek	Bethel	Sr.	Hastings, Minn.	2022

**2023 MIAC Softball Rookie of the Year**

Position	Name	Institution	Class	Hometown   High School
P	Ellie Peterson	Saint Benedict	Fy.	St. Anthony Village, Minn.

**2023 MIAC Softball Coach of the Year**

Name	Institution	Previous Selections
Penny Foore	Bethel	2022

**2023 MIAC Softball All-Conference Team**

Position	Name	Institution	Class	Hometown   High School	Previous Selections
C	Laurie Avila	Carleton	Sr.	Sugar Grove, Ill.   Oswego	--
C	Julia Azure	St. Catherine	Sr.	Lino Lakes, Minn.   Centennial	2021 (HM)   2022
C	Peyton Berg	Saint Mary's	Fy.	Chatfield, Minn.	--
C	Gabby Cook	Hamline	Sr.	Longmont, Colo.   Fairview	2022
C	Medora Rylee	St. Olaf	So.	Chaska, Minn.	--
1B	Amelia Christenson	St. Olaf	So.	Maple Grove, Minn.   Wayzata	--
2B	Cassie Cuniff	Carleton	Sr.	Mt. Prospect, Ill.   Prospect	--
2B	Tori Harren	Saint Benedict	Jr.	Kimball, Minn.	--
2B	Izzy Wilhelm	Bethel	Sr.	Little Canada, Minn.   Roseville Area	--
3B	Anne Fossum	St. Olaf	Jr.	Northfield, Minn.	--
3B	Ali French	Saint Mary's	Fy.	Winona, Minn.   Cotter	--
SS	Emily Bergin	Macalester	Sr.	Houston, Texas   St. Thomas Episcopal School	--
SS	Autumn Earney	Bethel	So.	Ellsworth, Wis.	2022
SS	Kallie Finkbeiner	Saint Benedict	Fy.	Monticello, Minn.	--
SS	Helen McKinnon	St. Catherine	Fy.	Farmington, Minn.   Rosemount	--
SS	Maya Patty	St. Olaf	Sr.	St. Paul, Minn.   Mounds View	2022
SS	Jenna Rubbelke	Hamline	So.	North St. Paul, Minn.	2022
OF	Taylor Brunn	St. Catherine	Sr.	Little Canada, Minn.   Concordia Academy	2021   2022
OF	Lexi DeBace	Bethel	Gr.	Little Canada, Minn.   Roseville	2021   2022
OF	Tarah DeCroock	St. Olaf	Sr.	Farmington, Minn.	2019   2021   2022
OF	Allie Fauth-Kilgore	Bethel	Gr.	Hutchinson, Minn.	2018   2019   2021   2022
OF	Sophie Futchko	Macalester	So.	Prince Frederick, Md.   Huntingtown	2022
OF	Riley Hall	Saint Mary's	Jr.	Dallas Center, Iowa	2022
OF	Kayla Herda	Gustavus	So.	Farmington, Minn.	--
OF	Madelyn Mueller	Gustavus	Jr.	North Mankato, Minn.   Mankato West	2021   2022
OF	Renee Nicholson	Macalester	So.	Downers Grove, Ill.   South	--
OF	Gabby Spencer	Saint Benedict	Sr.	St. Paul, Minn.   Roseville	2021   2022
OF	Jordyn Swoboda	Saint Benedict	Sr.	Willmar, Minn.	2021   2022 (HM)
OF	Molly Wilde	Concordia	Sr.	St. Michael, Minn.   St. Michael-Albertville	--
DP	Sidney Bartels	Bethel	Fy.	Ellsworth, Wis.	--
DP	Heather Nordlund	Saint Mary's	So.	Byron, Minn.	--
P	Maizie Anderson	Gustavus	Fy.	Rosemount, Minn.	--
P	Elly Novak	Saint Benedict	Sr.	Montgomery, Minn.   Tri-City United	2021   2022
P	Piper Otto	Gustavus	Sr.	Brooklyn Park, Minn.   Champlin Park	2021 (HM)   2022
P	Ellie Peterson	Saint Benedict	Fy.	St. Anthony Village, Minn.	--
P	Kayla Simacek	Bethel	Sr.	Hastings, Minn.	2021   2022

**2023 MIAC Softball Honorable Mention**

Position	Name	Institution	Class	Hometown   High School	Previous Selections
C	Bryn Carlstrom	Saint Benedict	Jr.	Rochester, Minn.   Mayo	2021 (AC)   2022 (AC)
C	Samantha Paniagua	St. Scholastica	So.	Corona, Calif.   Centennial	--
1B	Cat Smetana	Saint Benedict	Fy.	Lake Elmo, Minn.   Stillwater	--
2B	Josephine Cariveau	Hamline	Fy.	Phoenix, Ariz.   Arcadia	--
2B	Caitlin Olafsson	Gustavus	Fy.	Woodbury, Minn.   East Ridge	--
2B	Sarah Posey	St. Catherine	So.	Sierra Vista, Ariz.   Veritas	--
3B	Kayla Hokanson	Bethel	Sr.	Shakopee, Minn.	2022 (AC)
SS	Torrie Rehder	Augsburg	So.	Goodhue, Minn.	--
SS	Bryanna Schaffer	Carleton	So.	San Diego, Calif.   Mar Vista	--
OF	Hannah Peschel	St. Olaf	Jr.	Shoreview, Minn.   Mounds View	2022
P	Riley Leonhardt	St. Catherine	Fy.	Dayton, Minn.   Champlin Park	--
P	Ashley Matejka	St. Scholastica	Jr.	Oak Forest, Ill.   Carl Sandburg	--
P	Libby Moore	Augsburg	So.	Springville, Iowa	--
P	Jenna Peschel	St. Olaf	Jr.	Shoreview, Minn.   Mounds View	--

**2023 MIAC Softball All-Playoff Team**

Position	Name	Institution	Class	Hometown   High School	Previous Selections
1B	Mikaela Girard	Bethel	So.	Northfield, Minn.	2022
2B	Andy Conway	St. Olaf	Sr.	Dundee, Ill.   Dundee-Crown	--
3B	Ali French	Saint Mary's	Fy.	Winona, Minn.   Cotter	--
OF	Lexi DeBace	Bethel	Gr.	Little Canada, Minn.   Roseville	--
OF	Allie Fauth-Kilgore	Bethel	Gr.	Hutchinson, Minn.	--
OF	Kayla Herda	Gustavus	So.	Farmington, Minn.	--
OF	Gabby Spencer	Saint Benedict	Sr.	St. Paul, Minn.   Roseville	2022
OF	Jasmine Ziegler	St. Catherine	Sr.	Prior Lake, Minn.	--
DP	Katie Weisheit	St. Olaf	Jr.	Wheaton, Ill.   Wheaton Warrenville South	2021
P	Elly Novak	Saint Benedict	Sr.	Montgomery, Minn.   Tri-City United	2021
P	Piper Otto	Gustavus	Jr.	Brooklyn Park, Minn.   Champlin Park	--
P	Ellie Peterson	Saint Benedict	Fy.	St. Anthony Village, Minn.	--
P	Kayla Simacek	Bethel	Sr.	Hastings, Minn.	2022