

2016 MIAC Women's Golf Championship Preview

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COON RAPIDS, Minn. – In recent years, the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) has seen a surge in women's golfing talent and – in response – records have fallen left and right. The past two championships have seen the top two 54-hole scores and the top-three 18-hole scores in tournament history, so it's safe to say expectations are high for the scores to continue to go lower as the 2016 MIAC Championships get set to tee off.

The University of St. Thomas set an 18-hole conference championship scoring record en route to its 2015 title. The Tommies' second-round score of 297 was the best 18-hole mark in tournament history, and UST's three-day total of 937 stands as the second-best mark in MIAC Championships history. That total was good for a decisive 22-shot win to claim the conference title.

After the Tommies, Carleton finished second with a score of 959, and St. Catherine continued its rapid improvement to join the top three with a 54-hole total of 967. Saint Benedict (997) and Bethel (1,011) rounded out the top five, with Gustavus (1,014) just three shots behind the Royals in sixth. St. Olaf (1,057), Concordia (1,076), Augsburg (1,080), Saint Mary's (1,090) and Macalester (1,103) occupied spots Nos. 7-11 in the 2015 standings.

Once again, Carleton and St. Thomas have proven to be the favorites with their performance this fall. The Knights lead the MIAC with an average of 313.4 shots per round, and the Tommies aren't far behind at 316.2. After that, Bethel (322.2) and St. Catherine (322.2) are tied for the third-best mark and Saint Benedict (328.8) and Gustavus (329.2) round out a formidable top-six. St. Olaf ranks seventh at 357.4, Concordia is right behind the Oles with an average of 360.9 and Saint Mary's (375.2) and Augsburg (379) occupying the final two spots in the rankings.

The 2015 Championship saw Carleton's Grace Gilmore win her second-straight individual medalist honor, but her graduation in May means there will be a new MIAC individual champ in 2016. St. Thomas' Emily Thul is the reigning MIAC Player-of-the-Year and Carleton's Ziyi Wang was named the conference's Rookie-of-the-Year ago, and they headline an extremely deep crop of returners, as 12 of last season's 15 All-Conference golfers are back. Heading into the MIAC meet, Thul's 78.9 scoring average ranks sixth and Wang's even 77.0 average is third-best in the league.

In addition to Thul, Rachel Morris and Majra Sorensen return for the Tommies as they eye another MIAC title and a top-10 national finish. Carleton graduated Gilmore, but brings back Wang and fellow All-MIAC golfers Geraldine Tellbuescher and Ayumi Sakamoto to keep the Knights in the title conversation, and 2013 MIAC individual medalist Shannon Holden returns to the lineup after studying abroad. St. Catherine also has an All-MIAC trio back in Kaitlyn Alvarez, Abby Conzemius and Sydney Busker. Christine Piwnica is back for Bethel, Natalie Amundson returns for Saint Benedict, and McKenzie Swenson returns to the Gustavus line up to give the MIAC women a dozen returners from last year's All-Conference squad and a former medalist back as well.

A Carleton newcomer – Alyssa Akiyama – has the top scoring average of 75.5 thus far in 2016, and the rest of the top 10 is filled with familiar names. Piwnica is second (76.0) with Wang and Sakamoto (77.9) next to give the Knights three of the top four. UST's Morris (78.3) and Thul rank fifth and sixth, CSB's Amundson and St. Kate's Conzemius share seventh at 79.0. Fellow Wildcat Alvarez and her 79.5 average rank ninth, and St. Thomas' Morgan McCorkle (79.8) rounds out the top 10 heading into the MIAC Championship. Bethel's Leah Swanson (80.1) and Gustavus' Mae Meierhenry (81.1) and Jessica Nelson (81.1) are just outside the top 10 and have had solid fall seasons as well.

St. Olaf will be led by Melissa Biesmann (84.6) and Meaghan Carney (85.1). Concordia's top players heading into the MIAC meet have been Erin Pennington (86.3) and Emily Grace Olson (88.6). Augsburg's top players this fall have been Taylor Salewske (89.3) and Isabel Karbo (90.3), and Saint Mary's has gotten an outstanding fall from Kaitlin Kling (82.3) and are also led by Madison Gately (90.5). Macalester will not participate in the 2016 MIAC Women's Golf Championship.

The three-day, 54-hole MIAC Golf Championships will tee off Saturday at 10:50 a.m. at Bunker Hills. Sunday's second round will also tee off at 10:50 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](#) | [Women's Live Scoring](#) |

MIAC GOLF CHAMPIONSHIPS PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

MIAC WOMEN'S GOLF LINKS

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TEAM-BY-TEAM PREVIEWS

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

Head Coach

• Eric Rolland (3rd season)

A Year Ago

• 9th place | Score: 1,080

Players to Watch

- Taylor Salewske (JR | Team-best 89.3 stroke average and .479 (91-99) win-loss percentage; 38th at 2015 MIAC Championships; 90.1 stroke average in 27 career rounds as an Auggie; competed at Stetson (Fla.) in fall half of 2014-15 season before transferring to Augsburg.)
- Isabel Karbo (SO | 2nd on team with 90.3 stroke average and .408 (115-167) win-loss percentage; 25th at 2015 MIAC Championships; 90.1 stroke average in 24 career rounds.)
- Wendy Anderson (SR | 3rd on team with 102.4 stroke average; 104.2 stroke average in 39 career rounds.)

Did You Know?

- Wendy Anderson and Taylor Salewske earned Academic All-MIAC honors in 2015-16. Anderson is a business administration/marketing major with a 3.9787 GPA, while Salewske is a marketing major with a 3.5 GPA.



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

Head coach

- Trent Anderson (6th season)

A Year Ago

- 5th place | Score: 1,011

Players to Watch

- Christine Piwnica (Jr. | Two-time WCGA All-Region, Two-time MIAC All-Conference, 76.0 average, four events, one medalist round, three Top 5 finishes, one round under par)
- Leah Swanson (Sr. | 2015 MIAC All-Conference, 80.1 average, four events, three Top 10 finishes)
- Kayla Ruf (Fr. | 83.3 average, four events, low round of 79)

Did You Know?

- Bethel's 322.5 average per 18 holes is the best in program history, bettering the previous mark of 331.7 that was set in 2014-15. The Royals' 311 at the Wartburg Fall Invite set a new program low for a single round.



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

Head coach

- Eric Sieger (16th season)

A Year Ago

- Second place | Score: 959

In the 2016 Postseason

- Grace Gilmore '16 and Ziyi Wang both qualified for the 2016 NCAA Championships as individuals. Wang finished tied for 21st, and received All-American Honorable Mention honors. Gilmore finished 23rd in a field of 109 golfers.

Players to Watch

- Alyssa Akiyama (Fy. | Lowest scoring average [75.5] in the MIAC this fall; fired a MIAC-record final-round 67 to win the Wartburg Invite; has finished among top-4 at every tournament this season)
- Ziyi Wang (So. | Third-best scoring average (77.0) in the MIAC this season; All-American Honorable Mention in 2015-16; WCGA All-Region, All-MIAC and MIAC Rookie-of-the-Year in 2015-16)
- Ayumi Sakamoto (So. | Fourth-best scoring average (77.9) in the MIAC this fall; All-MIAC in 2015-16 after ninth-place finish at conference championships)

Did You Know?

- Carleton Knights have won the last three individual conference championships. Shannon Holden '17 took the title as a rookie in 2013, and Grace Gilmore '16 won in both 2014 and 2015.



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

Head coach

- Joe Christianson (1st season)

A Year Ago

- 8th place | Score: 1,076

Players to Watch

- Erin Pennington (Jr. | Leads the team in scoring average in 2016; Has been the team's top golfer in all three events she has played in this year)
- Emily Grace Olson (Sr. | Second on the team in scoring this year; Has been the team's No.1 golfer in the past two meets Relevant Honors)

& Stats)

- Alyssa Dalen (Fr. | Third on the team in scoring; has shot in the 80's in three of her last four rounds)

Did You Know?

- Head coach Joe Christianson helped Norman County West win the Minnesota State High School team title back in 1998.



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

Head coach

- Scott Moe (13th season)

A Year Ago

- 6th place | Score: 1,014

Players to Watch

- McKenzie Swenson (Jr. | 2015-16 All-Conference ... 84.1 average ... one top-10 finish in four events)
- Mae Meierhenry (Sr. | 81.1 average ... season-low round of 77)
- Jessica Nelson (Jr. | 81.1 average ... one top-10 finish in four events ... season-low round of 78)

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.



SAINT BENEDICT | [Blazers women's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Daryl Schomer (6th season)

A Year Ago

- 4th place | Score: 997

Players to Watch

- Natalie Amundson (So. | All-MIAC and All-Region as a first year; T2 at 2015 MIAC Championships)
- Liz Day (Jr. | Top-35 finish at 2015 championships, second in team in scoring average this season)
- Madeline Pagel (So. | Top-35 finish at 2015 championships, third on team in scoring average this season)

Did You Know?

- Natalie Amundson's scoring average of 80.2 last season was the best by a first year in the history of CSB golf. She currently leads the team and is tied for seventh in the MIAC with a 79 scoring average in 2016.



ST. CATHERINE | [Wildcats' women's golf home page](#) |

Head coach

- Mary Sweeny (2nd season)

A Year Ago

- 3rd place | Score: 967

Players to Watch

- Kaitlyn Alvarez (Jr. | 2x All-MIAC honoree; 11th at 2015 MIAC Championship; holds school record for best 54-hole individual score; finished T-1 at 2016 College City Challenge Sept. 26-27)
- Sydney Busker (So. | 2016 All-MIAC honoree; T-7 at 2015 MIAC Championships; holds school record for lowest individual 36-hole score)
- Abby Conzemius (Sr. | 3x All-MIAC honoree; T-7 at 2015 MIAC Championships; holds school record for lowest individual 18-hole score)

Did You Know?

- The Wildcats were recognized as one of the top academic teams in collegiate golf over the summer. The team's cumulative team GPA of 3.699 during the season was tied with Yale at No. 18 in the WGCA's top-25 list.



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

Head coach

- Greg Moore (2nd season)

A Year Ago

- 10th place | Score: 1,090

Players to Watch

- Kaitlin Kling (Jr. | Leads team with 82.3 scoring average. ... Has carded four rounds of 80 or lower—including career-best 77 at Saint Benedict Invitational. ... Shot school-record 36-hole 159 (80-79) at D3 Classic.)
- Madison Gately (Sr. | Second on the team in scoring average at 90.5. ... Shot a career-best 82 during opening round of this year's D3 Classic. ... Has carded rounds of 90 or better in each of her last four rounds.)

Did You Know?

- After not carding a score below 82 in her first two collegiate seasons, Kaitlin Kling has recorded four rounds of 80 or better—including a pair of 79s and a collegiate-best 77.

ST. OLAF



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

Head coach

- Katie Luckraft (Connelly) (4th season)

A Year Ago

- 7th place | Score: 1,057

Players to Watch

- Melissa Biesmann (FY)
- Meaghan Carney (Junior)



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

Head coach

- Sara Evens (11th season)

A Year Ago

- MIAC Champions | Score: 937

In the 2016 Postseason

- T-8th NCAA Championships, 54-hole score: 947

Players to Watch

- Rachel Morris (Sr., | 78.3 fall average; 3X All-MIAC, placed 5th, 4th and 5th in three career MIAC meets)
- Emily Thul (Jr., | 78.9 fall average; All-America, 2015-16: 3rd in NCAA Championships, tie 2nd in MIAC meet)
- Morgan McCorkle (Jr., | 79.8 fall average; 12th in 2015 MIAC meet)

Did You Know?

- UST's 304-304/608 score to win the Sept. 17-18 Division III Classic set a school record for 36 holes. It's also just the second time any MIAC team had two sub-305 rounds in one tournament. UST had another rarity on the opening day with four players shooting in the 70s.

[MIAC Women's Golf Home Page](#)