

2012 Women's Outdoor Track and Field Championship preview

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MOORHEAD, Minn. -- The 2012 MIAC Women's Outdoor Track and Field Championships begin Friday at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., and the top storyline is whether St. Thomas can continue its reign atop the standings as the Tommies eye their eighth-consecutive outdoor conference title.

St. Thomas has won 27 of the 30 MIAC Women's OTF Championship team titles, with only this year's host, Concordia (two) and St. Olaf (one) standing between the Tommies and all 30 titles. This season, Joe Sweeney's team will try to make it eight in a row and 28-for-31 at the outdoor meet, however, the host Cobbers were the last team to knock UST off the top spot back in 2004.

A year ago, the Tommies won by just 11 points (143.5-132.5) over a very good Gustavus team, with Saint Benedict (107), Concordia (90) and Hamline (85.5) rounding out the top five. Bethel, Augsburg, St. Olaf, Carleton and Macalester joined the top 10, and St. Catherine and Saint Mary's rounded out the 2011 standings.

This season, the Tommies pursuit of another title - and the rest of the league's pursuit of the Tommies, ranks among the top storylines in an event that should be filled intrigue. The top individual headline is a familiar one, as Carleton senior Simone Childs-Walker aims for history in the 5,000- and 10,000-meter runs. The Knights' star is the three-time defending champ in both events (and ranked No. 4 in the nation in the 5K) and, as the top seed again in both, she looks to pull off the rare four-peat not once, but twice. Childs-Walker pulled off the double four-peat in March at the MIAC Indoor meet, when she completed career victories in both the 3,000- and 5,000-meter runs.

Headlining the Tommies' hopes for another title is the breakout star of the 2011 season, Emily Van Heel. The UST sophomore was second in the 200- and 400-meter dashes and the triple jump champion a year ago, and she returns seeded first in the 200 and fifth in the triple. St. Thomas is also strong in the distance events, with Larissa Peyton seeded first in the 800-meter run and Taylor Berg also one of the top returning runners. UST also fields a pair of top-10 nationally-ranked relay teams.

The home team is already off to a great start, as Concordia's Kaari Jensen set a new MIAC record with her win in the heptathlon last weekend. Jensen's record score makes her the highest nationally-ranked athlete in the conference, as her point total is the second-best in Division III this season. The Cobbers have high hopes in the jumping events, where Chelsea Klemetson is ranked first in the MIAC and 10th nationally in the high jump and Hilary Thompson has the conference's top distance in the triple jump this season.

The top newcomer at the MIAC Indoor meet in March was St. Olaf freshman Dani Larson, and she enters her first conference outdoor meet as one of the top athletes to watch as well. Larson has the MIAC's top time in the 400-meter dash and 400-meter hurdles, and she's ranked in the top 25 nationally in both the 400-hurdles and the high jump. Larson's teammate, Maren Westby, has the MIAC's top time in the 1,500-meter run this season, and is ranked in the top 10 in Division III.

Hamline has big expectations in the throwing events thanks to Brenna Coyle and Becky Culp. Coyle is the defending champion in the hammer throw and returns as the top seed in 2012, and Culp enters both the shot put and the discus as the favorite after leading the MIAC in both events during the outdoor season.

Other athletes to watch this weekend include Gustavus' Allyson Voss, who is seeded first in the pole vault and ranked No. 9 in Division III. Bethel's Ashley Magelssen is the defending champion in the 100-meter dash, and appears ready to defend her title with the conference's top time in the event this season, as well as a No. 12 national ranking. Saint Benedict's Julia Renner is the 2010 MIAC champ in the long jump, and could add another title this weekend as the top seed in the event.

The 2012 MIAC Outdoor Track and Field Championships will begin Friday in Moorhead with field events starting at 1 p.m. and running events beginning at 1:30 p.m. Saturday's field events will start at 11:30 a.m. with running events scheduled to start at 1 p.m. The meet's final event will begin Saturday at 5:15 p.m., and a short awards ceremony will follow to honor the men's and women's team champions.

The MIAC has set up a home page for the 2012 MIAC Outdoor Track and Field Championships, including entries, heat sheets, links



to live scoring and other meet information, and it will be updated throughout the weekend with results and recaps. Concordia's sports information department also has a [home page](#) for the event, with great preview information and other links, and it will also be updated frequently throughout the meet.

2012 MIAC Outdoor Track & Field Championships Website | [Concordia's event page](#)

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Coach: Dennis Barker (18th season)

2011 Championship Finish: 7th (53 points)

Augsburg Championship Preview

A season ago at the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships, Augsburg head coach Dennis Barker saw his team record three individual conference titles, along with its highest outdoor team finish since the 1996 season. This season the Auggies will enter the MIAC Championships at Concordia College-Moorhead with a talented, yet inexperienced group.

Leading the Auggies at the conference meet this season will be veteran sprinter Ashley Carney (JR, Lakeville, Minn./Lakeville South HS). Carney, who claimed All-American honors with an eighth-place national finish in the 60-meter dash during the indoor season, has continued her outstanding performance outdoors, as she has claimed six individual victories and nine top-four finishes this spring. Carney currently owns the conference's second-fastest time in the 100-meter dash at 12.18 seconds (wind-aided), while her top non-wind-aided time of 12.25 seconds is ranked as the 29th-fastest time among all DIII participants in the event this season. In addition to her performance in the 100, Carney will also compete in the 200-meter dash, where she currently owns the third-best time in the conference this season at 25.59 seconds. Carney claimed an individual conference title in the 60-meter dash in a meet-record 7.74 seconds at the MIAC Indoor Championships.

In the field events, Augsburg pole vaulter Brittany Tuberg will look to build on last season's sixth-place finish at the outdoor conference meet. Tuberg, who currently owns the school records in both the indoor and outdoor pole vault, will enter this year's conference meet ranked fifth with a height of 3.22 meters (10-feet-6.75).

Sprinter Molly Allen (FY, Stillwater, Minn.) will enter her first conference meet looking to qualify for the event finals in both the 100- and 200-meter dashes. Allen recorded a season-best time of 13.10 seconds in the 100-meter dash at last weekend's Hamline Meet of the UnSaintly. Allen also recorded a season-best time of 26.93 seconds in the 200 at the Wisconsin-River Falls Falcon Invitational on April 13.

Fellow first-year sprinter Tabby Roh (FY, La Crosse, Wis./Central HS) will look to join Allen and Carney in the 200-meter field. Roh recorded a season-best 200 time of 26.94 seconds at the Falcon Invite.



Bethel

Coach: Jim Timp (7th season)

2011 Championship Finish: 6th (67.5 points)

Bethel Championship Preview

The Bethel University Royals have much to look forward to, as they prepare for the MIAC Track and Field Championships this weekend. BU will look to improve on its eighth-place finish from one year ago, as they have grown stronger in all events.

Rachel Kalk (So., Isanti, Minn.) is coming off a blistering time of 15.03 in the 100-meter hurdles race last week at the Janis Rider Invitational on the campus of the University of St. Thomas. Kalk's time propels her into first place coming in to the event. Kalk also has had success in the triple jump thus far this year; a category she placed eighth at in the 2011 Championships.

Along with Kalk, Nichole Berschied (So., Holdingford, Minn.) has been a standout in the triple jump event, as well as the long jump. Earlier in the spring Berschied recorded a long jump of 5.21 meters at the 2012 Don Church Invitational held at Wheaton College, and also composed a triple jump leap of 10.71 meters. Both efforts have Berschied in the Top 10 of each competition.

Another success story for Bethel this season has been its sprinters. Leading the way for the Royals is sophomore Ashley Magelssen (So., Forest Lake, Minn.), who owns the number one time in the MIAC and number 12 time nationwide for the 100-meter dash and the sixth best time in the 200-meter dash. Magelssen's 12.11-performance at the Meet of the Unsaintly last Saturday has her just a lean ahead of her closest competitors in the 100-meter affair, while her time of 25.87 in the 200-meter dash at the Holst Invitational is just milliseconds behind first. Additionally, her times in both the 100- and 200-meter dash are now stamped at No. 1 in the Bethel University record book.

Magelssen is also a quarter of the Royal's dynamic relay teams. Her alongside Ashley Quick (So., Johnston, Iowa), Courtney Fregeau (So., Andover, Minn.), and Krista McCright (Jr., Cedar Rapids, Minn.) have set every BU record in the sprint relays in both indoor and outdoor competitions. The quartet's 4x100-meter relay time of 47.91 at the Tommie Twilight is just six tenths behind first place, and is 17th nationwide. The foursome broke the school record in the 4x200-meter relay at the Drake Relays just weeks ago, and in addition they own the 4x400-meter relay record. The overall time of 3:54.08 previously recorded in the 4x400-meter ranks second in the conference and 15th nationwide.

Courtney Fregeau is not only a significant part of the relay team, but has been exceptional in the 400-meter dash. Fregeau's time of 58.62 in the Meet of the Unsaintly ranks fifth among all MIAC runners. Additionally, Ashley Quick recorded a time of 59.44 at the Meet of the Unsaintly last Saturday to breach the Top 10 in the event.

Krista McCright has also broken into the Top 10 of the 100-meter dash, as her time last Saturday at Hamline's Meet of the Unsaintly has her ranked sixth in the MIAC (12.57).

In the 1500-meter race, Mollie Gilberg (Fr., Coon Rapids, Minn.) is in the Top-15 among all conference opponents, with a time of 4:49.84 last Saturday.

The Royals have had success in the pole vault competition this year, as Angela Substad (Fr., Eagle Lake, Minn.) has stepped up and owns the third best vault in the conference and best record in the BU history books. Substad recorded a 3.35-meter lift during the Meet of the Unsaintly.

Finally, Steph Skoog (So., Richfield, Minn.), will also be a strong competitor in the High Jump, as her 1.55-meter jump at the Hamline Invitational has her just inches behind first place.



Carleton

Coach: Donna Ricks (19th season)

2011 Championship Finish: 9th (49 points)

Carleton Championship Preview

At the MIAC Outdoor Track and Field Championships, the Knights will look to build upon a phenomenal second-place finish at this year's conference indoor meet where the team showed its ability to compete with the best in the MIAC. Several senior-class standouts will lead the Knights in the outdoor meet, but the performances of key underclassmen will also prove vital to Carleton's success in the team competition.

All-American Simone Childs-Walker (Sr./Seattle, Wash./Lakeside) will once again lead the charge. Already a four-time conference champion in the two longest races at the indoor meet, Childs-Walker will look to match that accomplishment as she looks to capture a four-peat sweep of the 5,000- and 10,000-meter runs. Childs-Walker currently holds the fourth-fastest 10K-time in NCAA Division III this year. She owns the conference's top time in both events, just ahead of classmate Alison Smyth (Billings, Mont./Billings West).

Taylor Ffitch (Sr./Portland, Ore./St. Mary's Academy) is the third member of the senior class that will impact the distance races, as she also owns top 10 times at both distances.

The Knights will also rely on the leadership and experience of upperclassmen in the 4x800-meter relay. Clare Franco (Sr./Brunswick, Maine/Brunswick), Haley Johnson (Jr./Golden Valley, Minn./Robbinsdale Cooper), Sarah Trautman (Jr./Lexington, Mass./BBN), and Kaitlin Randolph (Sr./Drummond, Wis./Drummond) have combined to finish ahead of six Division-II teams in the event this season.

Megan Erlandson (Sr./Minneapolis, Minn./Minnehaha Academy) will complete her final season in the pole vault and 800-meter run. She captured top honors in the 800-meter race and cleared a season-best height of 3.22 meters at the Drake Alternative in late April.

Freshman Ellie Wilson (Fy./Roseville, Minn./Roseville) looks to continue her successful debut season with strong finishes in the 100-, 200-, and 400-meter runs. She was the MIAC indoor champ at the longest of those distances. The Knights will also rely on Franco and Trautman to help collect points in the shorter distance events.

In the field events, the Knights will rely heavily on Kao Sutton (So./Hilo, Hawaii/Kamehameha Schools Hawaii) to turn in solid scores in the hammer, discus, and shot put, similar to the ones that earned her All-MIAC Honorable Mention in 2011.



Concordia

Coach: Marv Roeske (17th season)

2011 Championship Finish: 4th (90 points)

Concordia Championship Preview

The Cobber women's track and field team enters the 2012 MIAC Championship Meet wanting more than just the No. 23. Concordia will be more focused on the numbers 1,2 or 3. CC has placed in the top 5 at the conference meet for 22 straight seasons and will be looking to make it 23 when they host the conference meet on May 10-11. This year Marv Roeske's crew is more geared to posting their first top 3 finish since 2008.

Concordia already enters the bulk of the MIAC Championship Meet in the lead. Thanks to Kaari Jensen's record-setting in the heptathlon at Carleton last weekend, the Cobbers lead the rest of the MIAC after one event. Jensen will be the "go-to" point scorer for Concordia at the meet. She is ranked in the top 15 in the conference in six different events. She rounds out her top field event marks by owning the top javelin mark, being ranked third in the long jump, seventh in the triple jump and 10th in the high jump. In track competition, she is second in the 100-meter hurdles and 14th in the 200 meters.

The Cobbers once again boast one of the top field groups in the conference. The fieldsters will be led by an outstanding core of jumpers. Concordia has four of the top 7 athletes in the long jump and six of the top 12 marks in the triple jump. Sophomore Hilary Thompson is ranked first in the triple jump and fourth in the long jump. Her season-best distance of 38-6.75 in the triple jump is in the top 15 of the country this season.

Besides Jensen and Thompson, Concordia has two other athletes ranked in the top 12 in both events. Katrina Gerzema is second in the long jump with a mark of 18-01.50 and 12th in the triple jump at 35-01.00. Senior Laura Farnam is in the top 10 in both events. She is ranked seventh in the long jump and ninth in the triple jump. Tatijana MullerDahlberg and Sara Parsons round out the top-tier jump squad. MullerDahlberg is fourth in the triple jump while Parsons is 11th in both jump events.

Cobber freshman Chelsea Klemetson rounds out the trio of Cobbers ranked No.1 in an event heading into the conference meet. She owns the top height in the high jump at 5-06 which is tied for the 10th best in all of DIII. Klemetson finished second in the high jump at the MIAC Indoor Meet and also competed at the NCAA National Meet.

Concordia has four other individuals ranked in the top 10 entering the MIAC Meet. Tessa Comstock is ranked eighth in the pole vault, Mary-Michael Vance is seeded ninth in the javelin, Hillary Bircham is third in the discus and Cherae Reeves is second in the shot put.

The two hurdle events feature the top ranked Cobber track athletes. In addition to Jensen in the 100-meter hurdles, Megan Hoffman is seeded third in the 400-meter hurdles and Olivia Decker and Alexa Cole are both in the top 10 of the 100-meter hurdles.

A pair of middle-distance runners should score solid team points for the Cobbers. Morgan Christian is seeded in the top 10 in both the 400 and 800 meters while Callie Christianson owns the 10th fastest time in the 800 meters. Finally, junior Elisabeth Hanson will be looking to make a splash in the 3000-meter steeplechase. She has the fourth best time in the conference this season.



Gustavus

Coach: Dale Bahr (3rd season)

2011 Championship Finish: 2nd (132.5 points)

Gustavus Championship Preview

With seven consecutive runner-up finishes at the MIAC Outdoor Championships, the Gustavus women's outdoor track and field will need to turn in its best performance of the season to get back on the podium in 2012. With the loss of standout Janey Helland due to graduation, the Gusties will need to step up across the board.

Top Gustavus competitors in the sprints will be Sarah Lundgren (Mankato, Minn.) and Amanda Iverson (Waconia, Minn.). Lundgren ranks third in the 400-meter dash with a time of 58.54, and Iverson ranks sixth in the 400 with a time of 58.93.

Caitlin Fermoyle (Mendota Heights, Minn.) will look to score big points as Gustavus' top distance runner. She ranks sixth in the 10,000 (39:09.94), 10th in the 5,000 (18:34.59), and 11th in the 1,500 (4:50.97) entering the meet. Fermoyle is also ranked eighth in the steeplechase with a time of 12:08.80. Beth Hauer (Little Falls, Minn.) will add depth in the distance races, ranking ninth in the 5,000-meter (18:31.37).

Danielle Burgmeier (Plymouth, Minn.) enters as the top Gustie hurdler, ranking second in the 400-meter hurdles with a time of 64.67. Erica Roelofs (Vernon Center, Minn.) will also look to score in the 400 hurdles while at the same time looking for a big day in the javelin. Roelofs ranks 11th in the 400 (68.02) and fifth in the javelin (110-3).

In the field events, the Gusties are led by Emily Klatt (Woodbury, Minn.) in the jumps. Klatt ranks in the top-five in the triple, long, and high jump competitions. She ranks fourth in the triple jump (35-10), and fifth in both the long jump (17-6.25) and high jump (5-2.50). Lauren Rothschilder (Chaska, Minn.) adds depth in the triple jump, ranking sixth with a leap of 35-10.

Allyson Hannemann (Mansfield, Ohio) and Rachel Colter (North St. Paul, Minn.) enter the conference meet as the top Gustie throwers. Hannemann is ranked ninth in the hammer throw (142-6) and 11th in the discus (122-6), while Colter sits in 13th in the shot put (37-0.50). Colter also ranks fourth in the javelin (112-5).

Allyson Voss (Wausau, Wis.) rounds out Gustavus' top competitors as the one to beat in the pole vault. She enters the meet in first after clearing an MIAC best 12-4.50.



Hamline

Coach: Shawn Johnson-Hipp (6th season)

2011 Championship Finish: 5th (85.5 points)

Hamline Championship Preview

If Hamline's women's track and field team are going to improve on last year's fifth place finish, they are going to have rely on the Killer B's and as well as some Super S's to continue their strong efforts in the field.

Becky Culp and Brenna Coyle have been dazzling them all year in the field. Culp enters this weekend's meet at Moorhead with the top effort this season in the Discus and the Shot Put as well as the fourth best Hammer Throw of the spring. Culp was second in the Discus last year. Her top throw this year of 144-0 is 15 feet that her 2011 effort in the conference meet. Her 45 5/8 work in the Shot Put is nearly six feet better than last year when she finished fifth in the event.

Coyle set a MIAC Meet record last year when she won the Hammer, going 171-5. She has thrown nearly two feet farther this year.

First year thrower Shawny Kramer has also been impressive, currently ranking right behind Coyle in the hammer (164-2) and sixth in the Discus. Her fellow surname Stephanie Jenkins adds depth to the team at the Pole Vault, where her 11-0 1/4 leap is the second best MIAC mark this spring.

The Pipers hopes to get added depth and points from sophomore Maria Theisen, whose 2:15.48 clocking in the 800 Meters is the third best of the spring in the league. A year ago, she ran seventh in the 1500 Meters. In 2012, she has chopped 15 seconds off the old time and stands third. Two other runners who may be ready to move up from their current sixth place standing are Heather Hollinger in the 5,000 Meters and Kaitlyn Frenchick, whose 66.96 time in the 400 Meters is a mere four seconds off the top effort this spring.

The Pipers enter the meet ahead of last year's pace in one respect. Last weekend in Northfield, Adrianna Acosta and Keelie Sorensen finished 6-7 in the Hepathlon. A year ago, Hamline did not have a competitor in this race.



Macalester

Coach: Martin Peper (12th season)

2011 Championship Finish: 10th (32.5 points)

Macalester Championship Preview

Macalester will send one of its deepest teams in years to the MIAC Championships and have several potential point producers as the team attempts to move up from last year's 10th-place finish.

Alexa Simpson (Jr. St. Elizabeth, Jamaica / Hampton School) is ranked in the top-seven on the MIAC honor roll in the 100-meter dash (12.59) and 200-meter dash (26.06). MIAC indoor 600-meter champ Irene Gibson (Fy., Carmel, Ind.) is looking to make the finals in the 400 and 800 and will be joined in the 400 by Daiga Kravale (So., Latvia / UWC of the Adriatic). Emily Bachhuber (Fy., Shorewood, Wis.) joins Gibson in the 800 meters.

The Scots could score points in the field events, led by Kate Rochat (Jr., Portland, Ore. / Cleveland) in the triple jump and long jump, and high jumpers Holly Schiedermayer (Sr., Waupaca, Wis.) and Audrey Mills (Sr., Marine, Minn. / Forest Lake). Schiedermayer was third in the HJ last year and Rochat is currently ranked No. 2 in the triple jump after placing fourth indoors. MIAC heptathlon fourth-place finisher Georgia Cloepfil (So., Portland, Ore. / Cleveland) could also be a factor.

School record-holder Stephanie Goei (Fy., Shoreline, Wash. / Shorewood) is ranked third in the hammer throw and could challenge for an all-conference placing.

The Scots have potential in the distance races, led by Anna Schmitz (So., St. Paul, Minn. / Central), who is ranked fifth on the MIAC honor roll in the 5K. Lucy Andrews (So., Plymouth, Minn. / Wayzata) and Becky Kane (So., Miladore, Wis. / Auburndale) are both in the top-ten in the steeplechase.

Macalester has its best relay teams in years.



Saint Benedict

Coach: Robin Balder-Lanoue (13th season)

2011 Championship Finish: 3rd (107 points)

Saint Benedict Championship Preview

Two months ago, the College of Saint Benedict Blazer track & field team placed fifth out of twelve teams at the MIAC Indoor Championships. Now, the Blazers are ready to step up to the plate at the 2012 MIAC outdoor Championships.

Since the outdoor season started, the Blazers have done nothing but shown their strength and prowess as they have taken a first place team finish in all their regular season meets. The momentum has been on the Blazers' side and it continues to grow.

Leading the Blazers are seniors Allison Eckrich (Spearfish, SD / Spearfish), Julia Renner (Shoreview, MN / Mounds View), and Kaycee Knutson (Esko, MN / Lincoln). Eckrich has taken control in the 400 meter dash with a best time of 58.77s, and has consistently placed first in the event. Renner has lead the Blazers in the long jump with a jump of 5.52m. Knutson has made her mark in the 3000 meter steeplechase with a time of 11:46.90. This time also ranks Knutson 7th in the Central Division.

Similarly, junior Erin Sand (New Prague, MN / New Prague) has contributed to the Blazer success. Sand has become a powerhouse for the sprinting events, specifically in the 200 meter dash. She has consistently taken the top spot in the event; with her best time in the event is 25.78s. Sophomore Clare Foley (Northfield, MN / Northfield) has also had a strong season as she as peeked just at the right time in the hammer throw with a throw of 39.13m.

First-year Bailey Drewes (Bemidji, MN / Bemidji) and sophomore Mandy Witschen (Monticello, MN / Monticello) complete the strength of the Blazer team. Drewes has shown her skill in the 10,000 meter run with a time of 39:16.85. Thanks to this time, Drewes is ranked 6th in the Central Division for the 10,000 meter run. Witschen has been a dominating figure in the 400 meter hurdles and in the heptathlon. She is currently ranked in the Central Division for both events; 6th in the 400 meter hurdles with a time of 1:06.13 and 5th in the heptathlon with 3,941 points.

The Blazers have the strength and the skill to become a top contender at the 2012 MIAC Outdoor Championships. With momentum on their side, Blazers are itching to leave it all out on the track come May 11th and 12th.



St. Catherine

Coach: Michael Henderson (6th season)

2011 Championship Finish: 11th (29.5 points)

St. Catherine Championship Preview

There will be many new faces wearing purple and gold for the Wildcats at the 2012 MIAC Track & Field Championships. The top three point scorers from 2011 graduated last spring, so the team will turn to a handful of returners and a plethora of first-years for this years championship event.

Sam Levercom (sprints) and Jamie Kelly (throws) provide strong senior leadership to the Wildcats. Both had solid indoor seasons, Kelly was MIAC runner-up in the shot put and Levercom anchored the team to a top five finish in the 4x200, and will be looking to end their collegiate careers on a high note.

The Wildcats junior class of Erin Coughlin, Kelsey Eder, Ariel Johnson and Steph Meschke are key contributors in all event areas. Coughlin and Eder were a part of last year's MIAC winning 4x400 meter relay team- and continue to run well in the long sprints, Meschke is the new school record holder in the javelin and Johnson has the team's fastest 5k and 10k times heading into the meet.

The rest of the Wildcat squad is a youth movement. Faith Berg (throws), Kristina Poss (distance), Madelin Skaalrud (sprints), and Haley Tsuji (pole vault) headline the sophomore class. Meanwhile a talented group of first-years are already making their impact felt on the school record books. Kalyse Engebretson (long sprints), Amanda Grundhofer (throws), Ailee Larson (mid-distance), Jule Muegge (multis), Sophie Shogren (mid-distance), Holly Staples (sprints/jumps), and Makayla Skluzacek (multis) have all already added their names to the St. Kate's top-ten performance lists.

The Wildcats hope this combination of youth and experience results in another exciting and productive championship meet.



Saint Mary's

Coach: Shawn McMahon (5th season)

2011 Championship Finish: 12th (16 points)

Saint Mary's Championship Preview

With the graduation two-time All-American Andrew Brueggen and national-qualifier Sara Harstad, center stage — and the spotlight that goes with it — is vacant for the Saint Mary's University men's and women's track and field teams.

For now — and not for long.

“As is the case every year, great athletes leave us,” SMU coach Shawn McMahon said. “And as is the case every year, returning athletes dig in and rise to the top of their own game — and I don't think this year will be any different.

“When someone re-writes the record books — especially at the MIAC level — you don't replace them. I think Andrew's example and his commitment to improve still very much exists among our returning athletes,” McMahon added. “People like Andrew, Brittany Kuehn and Sara Harstad are virtually impossible to replace, but we will be saying that about some of our current athletes once they move on, too.

“We've got some real talent ready to step forward.”

Leading the charge on the men's side are seniors David Feather (Oak Creek, Wis.), Robby McGuire (Rochester, Minn.) and Michael Mockler (Dubuque, Iowa), while an experienced women's squad is spearheaded by seniors Kassondra Burtis (Fairmont, Minn.), Stephanie Sturges (Woodbury, Minn.) and Regina Quandt (Minneapolis, Minn.).

“I'm very encouraged by the potential on both our men's and women's teams,” McMahon said. “There's some real top-end talent on both squads.”

On the men's side, the Cardinal distance runners are ready to steal the show, according to McMahon.

“A formerly young group, our distance and middle-distance runners have matured and I think those guys should expect to do some damage this year,” said McMahon. “David Feather and Robby McGuire are All-MIAC level competitors that have the experience and talent to get it done, and (juniors) Peter Borash (Bowlus, Minn.) and Jake Traxler (Le Center, Minn.) had great years last year and are coming off real solid cross country seasons.

“The distance squad is possibly the deepest Saint Mary's has ever had — the work of cross country coach (Ward) Berndt and assistant Brett Ayers is very evident.”

On the women's side, McMahon expects Burtis and junior Coco Booker (St. Paul, Minn.) to pick up a bit of the slack left by the graduation of Harstad, while Sturges and Quandt lead a talented group of runners.

“Coco had a great indoor season — finishing second in the shot put at the conference championships — and Kassondra keeps getting better every week. They both look to be on pace to be All-MIAC caliber performers,” McMahon said. “We'll be looking for Steph and Regina to provide some points (at the conference championships), while Bethany Schmidt (Sparta, Wis.) really started coming on last year as a great runner and I expect some good things from her this year.”

Add to that the emergence of distance runners Amy Spitzmueller (New Brighton, Minn.) and Katie Stolz (Forest Lake, Minn.) on the women's side, and Aaron Haley (Plainview, Minn.) on the men's side — all three coming off exceptional cross country seasons — and it's no wonder McMahon is walking around campus with a permanent smile on his face.

“It's always exciting this time of year,” said McMahon. “The potential is certainly there, and I'm looking forward to seeing what lies ahead for both squads.”



St. Olaf

Coach: Andrea Gelle (2nd season)

2011 Championship Finish: 8th (52 points)

St. Olaf Championship Preview

The St. Olaf women's track and field team, which finished third at the MIAC Indoor Championships in March, will look to capture another top spot in the Outdoor Championships.

Rookie Dani Larson, who earned All America honors in the high jump and pentathlon during the Indoor season, leads the MIAC in the 400 hurdles, 400 dash and high jump.

Emma Lee will return to lead the Oles in the distance events. Lee finished third in the 10,000 in 2011 and went on to finish 13th at the NCAA Championships. She has run the second fastest time in the MIAC and ninth fastest nationally, this year.

Senior Maren Westby, who leads the MIAC in the 1,500, hopes to end her career on a high note.

St. Olaf will load the distance events with veterans Becca Bevans and Rachel Dean.

Moriah Novacinski, Megan Holmes, and Jamie Mosel will compete for top spots in the middle distance events. Emily Stets, Tara Reyelts and Shaina Rud could factor in the long sprints.

In the field events, high jumper Elise Raney figures to place. She was second in 2011.

Seniors Lauren Harn and Kait Lorsbach, who finished fifth and sixth at the Indoor Championship, look to clear high bars in their final MIAC Championship.



St. Thomas

Coach: Joe Sweeney (31st season)

2011 Championship Finish: 1st (143.5 points)

St. Thomas Championship Preview

St. Thomas will attempt to repeat as MIAC outdoor track and field champions this weekend in Moorhead. The UST women have won seven in a row and 25 of the last 27 outdoor team titles, and also have a streak of 13 consecutive conference indoor crowns.

Coach Joe Sweeney, completing his 33rd season, has guided the Tommies to 68 conference team title in cross country and indoor/outdoor track and field.

The Tommie women are is seeded first in four events, second in four events, and third in four events.

In the MIAC indoor meet in March, St. Thomas outscored runner-up Carleton by a margin of 164-114. UST scored in 16 of 20 events and received points from 19 different athletes, with six victories.

In all, the St. Thomas men and women have won 109 all-time MIAC team titles in indoor and outdoor track and field.

Sweeney will lean on a few dynamic competitors to lead UST's 2012 championship pursuit.

--UST's 4x100 and 4x400 relays rank in the top five nationally. Its 4x100 ran 47.32 last week – just .07 of a second off the school record set by the 1997 NCAA champion relay team. The 3:49.87 clocking in the 4x400 is also one of the best in Tommie history.

--Sophomore sprinter Emily Van Heel has competed in three conference meets in her young career and already has a hand in nine individual/relay firsts.

--Senior Larissa Peyton and freshman Kayla Goeman (800), junior Taylor Berg (1,500) and sophomore Erin Statz (5,000) will be threats in the middle-distance and distance events.

--Senior Amy Maas is seeded in the top seven in the discus, shot put and hammer.