

2016 MIAC Women's Soccer Preview and Preseason Coaches' Poll

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2016 MIAC Conference Preview

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – Every new season begins with each team harboring thoughts of a championship. In the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC), all 12 women's soccer teams kick off the 2016 campaign with realistic hope that any team can ascend to the top of the standings – because it just happened a year ago.

If parity is the goal, then it was a mission accomplished in 2015, as the MIAC's top five teams were separated by just one game in the win column – including a three-way tie for second place that kept the battle for the MIAC title overly intriguing until the regular season's final buzzer. When the dust settled, the University of St. Thomas stood atop the pile, just a single point better than Gustavus, Augsburg and Macalester.

The Tommies' title was their fifth, but just the first since 2008. Meanwhile, the term "first" really applied to the upstart Gustie team that earned their first-ever MIAC Playoff appearance, first postseason win, and both their first MIAC Playoff title and NCAA Tournament bid when they upset UST in the conference tournament championship game. Gustavus' remarkable season is the biggest reason every team in the league enters 2016 with newfound hope. The Gusties' run came after they were picked to finish 11th in the 2015 Preseason Coaches' Poll, and was just 2-13-3 the previous season.

Looking back further at the MIAC archives reveals further parity. Since 2011, five different teams have claimed a regular-season championship. Saint Benedict and Carleton shared the title in 2011, Concordia won in 2012, the Blazers won again in 2013, Augsburg was the 2014 champ and St. Thomas was victorious a year ago, which proves that 2016 may really be anyone's year.

Last season, beyond the top four, St. Catherine also won seven games in MIAC play and earned its first Playoff bid, with Carleton and Concordia both over .500 as well and the Cobbers joining the postseason on tiebreaker criteria. Saint Benedict was a game back of those teams, and St. Olaf, Saint Mary's Hamline and Bethel rounded out the rest of the 2015 standings.

For those teams at the top, they learned a year ago exactly what it takes to prevail in such a tough, even league. For the rest, they saw first-hand how a team can make a meteoric rise into contention, the postseason, and beyond. Those valuable lessons learned a year ago should benefit each of the 12 teams as the new season begins, and should make for an unbelievably exciting two months on soccer fields around the MIAC.

COACHES CAST THEIR VOTES

A year ago, St. Thomas emerged from the five-team fight for the title, and the team enters 2016 with many of its star players back and expectations to break the recent MIAC trend and repeat as champs. The Tommies finished atop the 2016 MIAC Preseason Coaches' Poll with 114 points, 11 first-place votes, and 15 points of breathing room between UST and the rest of the contenders.

Head Coach Sheila McGill's roster is stacked once again after last season's 12-6-1 overall record and 8-2-1 MIAC mark (25 points). Leading the returners is the 2015 MIAC Defensive Player-of-the-Year Tarynn Theilig, who returns in goal for her senior season after an impeccable junior campaign. UST has plenty of offense back as well, as both Mallory DeBoom and Brielle Bierman each finished in the top 10 in scoring in the league a year ago.

After a three-team logjam at second in 2015, coaches expect similar parity at that spot this season as both Gustavus and Macalester received 99 points to share the No. 2 spot in the preseason poll. The MIAC Playoff-champion Gusties received four first-place votes, with Macalester receiving the other two. Both teams finished strong, with Gustavus rolling to its postseason title, and the Scots went 8-0-3 in their last 11 regular season games, and both hope that momentum continues in 2016.

Gustavus (13-7-1, 8-3 MIAC, 24 points) brings back nearly everyone from last season's Cinderella run, including All-North Region forward Maddison Ackiss and fellow All-MIAC selections Ashley Becker (GK) and Sophie Leininger (MF). Becker was also the league's Rookie-of-the-Year in 2015. Macalester (10-3-4, 7-1-3 MIAC, 24 points) will be stout on the back end with All-MIAC defender Michaela McGonigle back in St. Paul, and Clara Webby also back on "D" after All-MIAC Honorable Mention (HM) honors. Jamie Hasama was also an All-MIAC HM pick at forward with a team-best nine goals in 2015.



Augsburg (14-6, 8-3 MIAC, 24 points) was the other team in that second-place logjam, and the coaches expect another Playoff season for the Auggies as they finished fourth in the poll with 89 points. Saint Benedict (7-8-2, 5-6 MIAC, 15 points) was right on Augsburg's heels with 86 points to round out the top five. The Auggies have lots of experience back in All-Region senior midfielder Marta Anderson, along with All-MIAC HM seniors Carter Denison (F) and Emily Gregg (D). The Blazers bring back a pair of All-MIA HM veterans in senior Taylor Hedin (F) and junior Brooke DeMets (D) and goalkeeper Heather Kaluzniak is also back for her senior season as CSB tries to re-join the Playoff party.

The coaches picked Carleton (75 points) to finish sixth and earn the last Playoff spot, with St. Catherine (63 points) in seventh and Concordia (58 points) in eighth also as postseason contenders. The Knights (8-8-1, 6-5 MIAC, 18 points) bring back a talented sophomore duo of Annika Martensson (All-MIAC HM) and Diana Tyutyunnyk and senior goalkeeper Elaine Sundberg. The Wildcats (12-6-1, 7-4 MIAC, 21 points) were one of the MIAC's most pleasant surprises in 2015, and have All-Region midfielder Hannah Okerstrom back, along with fellow seniors Allie Boucher (D) and Julia Zyla (MF). The Cobbers will again be led by All-MIAC forward Emily Wendorff, and forward Paige McCullough (All-MIAC HM) and defender Carly Mickelson give Concordia a strong nucleus of senior leadership.

St. Olaf was picked to finish ninth with 40 points in the poll in the debut season of new head coach Rachel Sushner. The Oles were 4-10-4 (3-7-1 MIAC, 10 points) overall a year ago and hope for improvement in 2016 behind sophomore Kaylyn Billmeyer (D) and midfielders Grace Bestler (Sr.) and Emily Helle (Jr.). Hamline rounded out the preseason poll's top 10 with 35 points, and the Pipers (5-11-1, 2-8-1 MIAC) welcome back two-time All-MIAC midfielder Malya Hirshkowitz, along with leading scorer Arendje Louter and senior goalkeeper Amy Ramras.

Saint Mary's received 22 points to finish 11th in the poll after last season's 6-12 overall, 8-3 MIAC (9 points) campaign. The Cardinals have All-MIAC midfielder Emma Schaefer back, along with forwards Emily Loof and Maddy Wallraff to bring back most of their scoring. Bethel rounded out the preseason poll in 12th with 12 points. The Royals (3-15, 0-11, 0 points) will again be led by two-time All-MIAC HM midfielder Mikala Smith, defensive anchor Erin Ness and have high hopes for incoming keeper Dylan Melby.

The season begins with an almost-complete slate of games on Thursday, with 11 of the 12 MIAC teams kicking off the 2016 season against nonconference foes. Conference play begins on Tuesday, Sept. 13, and runs through the final day of the regular season, Saturday, Oct. 29. The MIAC Playoffs follow with quarterfinals on Nov. 1, semifinals on Nov. 2 and the championship on Nov. 5, with the winner getting an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament.

A CLOSER LOOK

The rest of the 2016 MIAC Women's Soccer Preview contains complete results from the 2016 Preseason Coaches' Poll, a video from MIAC Media, helpful links and a preview for each team submitted by their sports information director. The MIAC web site - www.miacathletics.com - will be an outstanding source for MIAC women's soccer news, schedules, scores, stats and more throughout the 2016 season.

Visit the [MIAC scoreboard](#) on game days to follow all the action, and download the [MIAC mobile app](#) to have all the information with you anywhere you travel. Also, connect to the conference on its [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) pages for updates and interaction all season long.

2016 MIAC Women's Soccer Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (11 for first, 10 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.

2016 MIAC Women's Soccer Preseason Coaches' Poll		
Rank	Institution	Total
1.	St. Thomas (11)	114
T2.	Gustavus (4)	99
T2.	Macalester (2)	99
4.	Augsburg	89
5.	Saint Benedict	86
6.	Carleton	75
7.	St. Catherine	63
8.	Concordia	58
9.	St. Olaf	40
10.	Hamline	35
11.	Saint Mary's	22
12.	Bethel	12

2016 MIAC Women's Soccer Playoffs

The [2016 MIAC 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, Nov. 1, the two semifinal games will be follow on Wednesday, Nov. 2, and the championship is set for Saturday, Nov. 5. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2016 NCAA Division III Women's Soccer Tournament.

| [MIAC Women's Soccer Playoffs Web Sites](#) | [2016](#) | [2015](#) |

MIAC Women's Soccer Links

| [2016 MIAC Schedule](#) | [2015 MIAC Statistics](#) | [MIAC Recordbook](#) | [MIAC Archives](#) |

MIAC Team-by-Team Previews

| [AUG](#) | [BU](#) | [CAR](#) | [CON](#) | [GAC](#) | [HU](#) | [MAC](#) | [CSB](#) | [SCU](#) | [SMU](#) | [STO](#) | [UST](#) |



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

Head Coach

- Mike Navarre (18th season)

A Year Ago

- 8-3-0 MIAC (t-2nd place) | 14-6-0 Overall

In the 2015-16 Postseason

- MIAC postseason results: Beat St. Catherine 2-0 in quarterfinals, lost at St. Thomas 2-0 in semifinals.

Players to Watch

- Marta Anderson (MF, SR | All-MIAC and NSCAA All-North Region 3rd team in 2015, All-MIAC Honorable Mention in 2014; 6 goals and 11 assists for 23 points in 2015, playing 78.3 minutes per-game; 11 goals and 22 assists for 44 points in 59 career games.)
- Carter Denison (F, SR | All-MIAC Honorable Mention in 2015; 3 goals and 7 assists for 13 points in 2015; 18 goals and 16 assists for 52 points in 57 career games.)
- Emily Gregg (D, SR | All-MIAC Honorable Mention in 2015; Anchor of Augsburg defense that allowed just 15 goals and had 11 team shutouts in 2015; Played in team-best 82.8 minutes per-game in 2015; 1 goal and 6 assists for 8 points in 59 career games.)

Did You Know?

- Augsburg shined on both offense and defense in 2015. The Auggies led the MIAC with 51 goals in 2015, a total 14 more than second-place Gustavus' 37 goals. Defensively, the Auggies allowed just 15 goals on the season, the second-fewest goals allowed in the league (Macalester's 10 were the fewest allowed). Augsburg's 11 team shutouts were tied with Gustavus for the most among league teams in 2015.



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

Head Coach

- Amanda Maxwell (5th season)

A Year Ago

- 0-11 MIAC (12th place) | 3-15 Overall

Players to Watch

- Mikala Smith (M, Sr. | Two-time MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention, 8 Pts. in 2015)
- Erin Ness (D, Jr. | 1 G in 2015, Anchor of Bethel Defense)
- Dylan Melby (G, Fr. | from Chanhassen High School)

Did You Know?

- After a season opening three game road-trip, the Royals will then play their next five matches all at home at the Ona Orth Athletic Complex which has been upgraded recently with a soccer team facility. The building was opened in the 2015 season but has since been upgraded and includes an air-conditioned team room with lockers for both the men and women along with a second level for film, broadcasting, statistics and small group gatherings and this summer the branding of the inside and outside of the building was completed.

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

Head Coach

- Jocelyn Keller (5th season)

**A Year Ago**

- 6-5 MIAC (6th place) | 8-8-1 Overall

Players to Watch

- Annika Martensson (M, So. | All-MIAC Honorable Mention, second on the squad with 5 goals scored)
- Elaine Sundberg (GK, Sr. | led MIAC goalkeepers last season with a .870 save percentage and was second with a 0.51 GAA)

- Diana Tyutyunnyk (F, So. | scored on 30.8 of her shot attempts last season, tied for tops among MIAC players with at least 4 goals scored; finished third on 2015 squad win goals [4] and points [8])

Did You Know?

- The Knights have made 6 trips to the postseason over the last 10 seasons, third-most among MIAC squads over that span. In that time, Carleton owns the MIAC's second-best win percentage (.682) in conference matches.

**CONCORDIA** | [Cobbers' women's soccer home page](#) |**Head Coach**

- Kevin Roos (4th season)

A Year Ago

- 6-5 MIAC (T6th place) | 12-8 Overall

Players to Watch

- Paige McCullough (F, Sr. | 2015 MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention; tied for the MIAC lead in assists in league games in 2015)
- Carly Mickelson (D, Sr. | 2-year starter on defense; Has played in 41 games in last two years)
- Emily Wendorff (F, Sr. | 2015 MIAC All-Conference; led the team in scoring for the second straight season in 2015; 20 career goals)

Did You Know?

- The Cobber women's soccer team has made the MIAC playoffs for 13 consecutive seasons.

**GUSTAVUS** | [Gusties' women's soccer home page](#) |**Head Coach**

- Laura Burnett-Kurie (5th season)

A Year Ago

- 8-3 MIAC (T2nd place) | 13-7-1 Overall

In the 2015 Postseason

- After a first round bye in the MIAC Playoffs, the Gusties shut out Concordia 2-0 and then went on to shut out and upset St. Thomas 1-0 for the MIAC Playoff Championship. Gustavus faced Wheaton in the first round of the NCAA Championships and lost 2-1.

Players to Watch

- Maddison Ackiss (Forward, Sr. | 2015 NSCAA All-North, MIAC All-Conference ... led team with nine goals, including a MIAC-high four game-winning goals ... team-high 20 points)
- Ashley Becker (Goalkeeper, So | 2015 NSCAA All-North, MIAC All-Conference and Rookie-of-the-Year ... started all 21 games in 2015 with 11 shutouts and 13 wins, both first in the league ... 1.02 goals against average and .802 save percentage)
- Sophie Leininger (Midfield, Jr. | 2015 MIAC All-Conference ... team-high nine assists, one short of the program single season record ... added one goal for 11 points)

Did You Know?

- After going 2-13-3 in 2014, the Gusties made the greatest turnaround in program history by going 13-7-1 last season. The Gusties also reached the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1998 after winning its first ever MIAC Playoff Championship.

**HAMLIN** | [Pipers' women's soccer home page](#) |**Head Coach**

- Ted Zingman (10th season)

A Year Ago

- 2-8-1 MIAC (11th place) | 5-11-1 Overall

Top Returners

- Malya Hirshkowitz (Sr., MF, All-MIAC two years in a row)
- Arendje Louter (So., F, led HU with six goals and two assists in 2015)
- Amy Ramras (Sr., school record holder for most shutouts in a career – 11)

Did You Know?

- The Pipers have 11 Washington state natives on their 2016 roster. In all, seven different states are represented, including Alaska and Hawaii.

MACALESTER | [Scots' women's soccer home page](#) |



Head Coach

- Michele Cornish (5th season)

A Year Ago

- 7-1-3 MIAC (T2nd place) | 10-3-4 Overall

Players to Watch

- Michaela McGonigle (D, Sr. | All-MIAC in 2015)
- Jaime Hasama (F, Jr. | All-MIAC honorable mention, team-best 9 G, 20 TP, 4 GWG)
- Clara Webby (D, So. | All-MIAC honorable mention)

Did You Know?

- The Scots closed out the 2015 regular season with an 8-0-3 record over their final 11 games heading into the playoffs. During that stretch, Macalester allowed just four goals while scoring 18.

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



Head coach

- Steve Kimble (8th season)

A Year Ago

- 5-6 MIAC (8th place) | 7-8-2 Overall

Players to Watch

- Taylor Hedin (F, Sr. | All-MIAC Honorable Mention, led team with 17 points)
- Heather Kaluzniak (G, Sr. | Played all 17 games in net last season, recorded 59 saves)
- Brooke DeMets (D, Jr. | All-MIAC Honorable Mention in 2014)

Did You Know?

- The CSB soccer team has finished the year with a winning record in 25 of the last 26 seasons.

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



Head Coach

- Chris Citowicki (6th season)

A Year Ago

- 7-4-0 MIAC (6th place) | 12-6-1 Overall

Players to Watch

- Hannah Okerstrom (MF, Sr. | 2016 team captain; 2015 All-MIAC, 2015 NSCAA Division III All-North Region Second Team; lead MIAC in regular season goals (13) and finished second in points (28); top-10 all-time at St. Kate's in career goals (19) and career points (41))
- Allie Boucher (D, Sr. | 2015 Academic All-MIAC, 2015 All-MIAC Sportsmanship team; tied for fourth on the team in points (6) and was second in assists (4) in 2015)
- Julia Zyla (MF, Sr. | 2016 team captain; top-10 all-time at St. Kate's in career assists (8); led the team in assists in 2013 and 2014)

Did You Know?

- The Wildcats made the MIAC Postseason tournament for the first time in program history in 2015 as the No. 6 seed.

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



Head Coach

- Neil Cassidy (6th season)

A Year Ago

- 3-8-0 MIAC (10th place) | 6-12-0 Overall

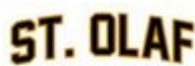
Players To Watch

- Emma Schaefer (Midfield, Sr. | 18 GP, 6 G, 1 A, 13 Pts. ... Led team in goals and points. ... 2015 First-Team All-MIAC, two-time honorable-mention All-MIAC ... 2014-15 First-Team All-MIAC in basketball)

- Emily Loof (Forward, Jr. | 17 GP, 1 G, 3 A, 5 Pts. ... Led team in goals and point as a freshman. ... 2014 honorable-mention All-MIAC)
- Maddy Wallraff (Forward, So. | 18 GP, 4 G, 0 A, 8 Pts. ... Second on team in goals and points)

Did You Know?

- Nine of the Cardinals' last 11 wins—including all six victories in 2015—have come on their home turf.



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

Head Coach

- Rachael Sushner (1st Season)

A Year Ago

- 3-7-1 MIAC (9th place) | 4-10-4 Overall

Players to Watch

- Kaylyn Billmeyer (D, So. | Started 13 games as a first year.)
- Grace Bestler (M, Sr. | 52 career starts, two career goals from backfield.)
- Emily Helle (M, Jr. | Five career goals.)

Did You Know?

- St. Olaf opens the season under first year head coach Rachael Sushner with a home game on Sept. 1 before five straight on the road... The Oles then play three of their seven home games in an eight-day stretch... St. Olaf was 3-4-1 on the road in 2015.



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

Head Coach

- Sheila McGill (10th Season)

A Year Ago

- 8-2-1 MIAC (MIAC Champions) | 12-6-1 Overall

In the 2015-16 Postseason

- MIAC No. 1 seed – defeated Augsburg 2-0 in Semifinals, fell to Gustavus 1-0 in Championship

Players to Watch

- Tarynn Theilig (GK, Sr. | 2015 MIAC Defensive Player-of-the-Year... 2x MIAC All-Conference (2014, 2015)... Tallied a record of 11-5-1 with six shutouts in 2015... Allowed 19 goals for a goals against average of 1.10 and made 72 saves for a save percentage of .791 last season... Career record of 19-13-5 with a GAA of 1.01... Compiled 165 career saves with a save percentage of .809 and 11 shutouts)
- Brielle Bierman (F, Jr. | Scored five goals (2nd/Team) and added seven assists (t-4th/MIAC) for a total of 17 points (t-10th/MIAC) in 2015... Started 22 of 31 career games played, scoring 10 goals to go along with eight assists for 28 career points)
- Mallory DeBoom (2015 MIAC All-Conference... Scored eight goals (t-6th/MIAC) and added four assists for 20 points (t-6th/MIAC) in her first collegiate season)

Did You Know?

- St. Thomas' 12 wins in 2015 was the first 10-win season in the last five years and its most wins since 2009.

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