

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

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BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – For the first time since the 2013 season, there is no clear-cut favorite in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) women's soccer Preseason Coaches' Poll, as Augsburg and St. Thomas are tied for the top spot in the balloting with six first-place votes and 116 points apiece. It has been six years since the last tie at the top of the preseason poll when coaches were split between Concordia and Saint Benedict in 2013.

After clinching the MIAC regular season championship, St. Thomas edged Augsburg, 3-1, in last season's MIAC Playoff Championship to earn its first-ever women's soccer playoff championship, as well as the conference's automatic qualifier to the NCAA Tournament. The Tommies finished the year 19-2-1 and made it to the round of 32 in the national tournament. St. Thomas will be challenged to replace the production of seven graduated seniors, including 2018 All-America selection and MIAC Offensive Player of the Year, Mallory DeBoom. Rising junior **Kate Heimer** figures to step into a larger leadership role for the Toms this season, having earned All-MIAC honors after collecting 21 points - including a pair of game-winning goals - in 22 matches last season. St. Thomas will be tested early in 2019, as the Tommies head to St. Louis, Mo. on September 7 for a matchup with No. 3-ranked Washington University.



Augsburg finished 2018 with a 14-7-0 record overall, marking the seventh straight year of double-digit victories for the Auggies. Augsburg will aim to keep that streak alive, along with its string of five consecutive MIAC playoff berths. One of the most dynamic scorers in both Augsburg and MIAC history, **Ashley St. Aubin**, returns to the pitch for her final season of college soccer this fall. The Burnsville, Minn. native led the conference in both goals and points for the third consecutive season by setting Auggie records with 21 goals and 53 points in 2018. St. Aubin received All-MIAC and a pair of All-America honors for her efforts. The Auggies will kick off the year with six non-conference matchups, including contests against 2018 NCAA Tournament qualifiers Wartburg, Loras, and Northwestern-St. Paul.

Saint Benedict received 91 points to come in at No. 3 in the preseason coaches' poll. The Bennies went 8-7-1 in 2018, reaching the conference playoffs for the second consecutive season and seventh time in the last nine years. Two-sport rising junior **Megan Thompson** continues to impress for CSB on both the soccer field and the basketball court. Thompson earned All-Region status last season after leading Saint Ben's in goals, points, and assists on the pitch, and was just as effective on the hardwood, earning All-MIAC honors for her play at point guard while leading the Bennies' basketball team in scoring last winter as well. Saint Ben's will need Thompson's athleticism and versatility to help combat a challenging non-conference schedule that includes the likes of No. 17-ranked Wis.-La Crosse on opening weekend, as well as 2018 NCAA Tournament qualifiers Wartburg and Loras in September.

On the heels of the program's best MIAC finish ever at 7-2-2 in conference play, the St. Catherine Wildcats picked up 86 points and the No. 4 spot in the preseason coaches' poll. St. Kate's finished fourth in the conference last season, advancing to the semifinal round after hosting and winning the program's first-ever home playoff game. After winning the MIAC Playoff title and heading to the NCAA Tournament in 2017, the Wildcats will be looking to get back into the national spotlight this fall and should be in good shape to contend. Rising sophomore **Lauren Witte** made an immediate impact in her debut season last year, collecting a team-high nine goals, including an overtime game-winner at Saint Mary's. Before embarking on the 2019 MIAC schedule, St. Kate's will hit the road for a pair of pivotal non-conference matchups against No. 17 Wis.-La Crosse and 2018 NCAA Tournament qualifier Northwestern-St. Paul.

St. Olaf earned 78 points in the preseason balloting to come in at No. 5 in the coaches' poll. The Oles went 10-6-2 overall last year with a 6-4-1 mark in conference play, including handing conference champ St. Thomas its only MIAC loss of the year. All-MIAC and All-Region midfielder **Claire Bash** accounted for the only scoring in that matchup and was part of a defensive unit that recorded a total of seven shutouts and held opponents to one goal or fewer in 14 of the team's 18 contests last season. In their seven-game non-conference schedule, the Oles will face five teams that qualified for conference tournaments last fall, as well as one regular season conference co-champion, beginning with St. Norbert in the opening game of the season on August 30.

Gustavus picked up 73 points in the Preseason Coaches' Poll, good for the No. 6 spot. The Gusties went 5-10-3 last season after reaching the MIAC Playoff title match in 2017, but will get a big boost this fall with the return of 2017 All-America goalkeeper **Ashley Becker**, who missed all of last season with an injury. Becker - a three-time All-Conference selection and the 2017 MIAC Defensive Player of the Year - started all 20 games for Gustavus two years ago, earning a 0.66 goals against average with 98 saves and a 10-6-4 record in nearly 1,900 minutes in-net. The Gusties took on three NCAA Tournament qualifying teams last season and will do so again in 2019, with September contests scheduled against Loras and Wartburg, as well as an October match against No. 17-ranked Wis.-La Crosse.

Carleton finished the 2018 campaign with a 6-7-4 record, which included a 1-1 opening season draw against then-No. 13-ranked MIT, and are set to open 2019 with five straight home contests. Four of those five games are non-conference with the fifth beginning the MIAC slate against Bethel on September 17. Carleton's final non-conference game of the year is scheduled for September 25 against No. 17 Wis.-La Crosse. **Kaela Mali** emerged as one of the league's top defensive players as a sophomore last season, helping Carleton hold opponents scoreless in six games last season and finish the year with a 1.10 goals-allowed average.

Macalester went 4-8-4 overall last season and will face stiff competition to start the 2019 campaign, as the Scots head to Iowa for contests against Wartburg and Loras - both 2018 NCAA Tournament qualifiers - on opening weekend. Honorable mention All-MIAC midfielder **Elizabeth Han** will be back for her senior season after starting all 16 games and logging nearly 1,300 minutes played for the Scots as a junior last year. Han posted a .400 shot-on-goal percentage on her 25 shots in 2018 and picked up a goal from 20 yards out on a free kick to secure a tie against Concordia last fall.

Bethel enjoyed a record-breaking season in 2018, equaling or tying 15 different program marks during a 13-4-1 run. Despite the successes of last fall, BU faces the challenges of transition this year, with a new head coach in Ben Linder, and the difficult task of replacing a pair of outstanding graduates in Britney Monteon - the program's first-ever All-American - and Maggie Sipe - Bethel's all-time scoring leader. On the plus side, **Rachel Waterman** returns to the lineup after an outstanding debut season in which she earned All-MIAC and Rookie of the Year honors by scoring eight goals and assisting on five more. Bethel opens up the season against Northwestern-St. Paul, which earned an automatic qualifier to the NCAA Tournament last season after winning the UMAC Playoffs.

Saint Mary's just missed out on a .500 record last season, going 8-10 overall, including a 6-1 mark in non-conference play. The team's only loss to a non-MIAC squad came against NCAA Tournament qualifier Loras, then ranked No. 22 in the nation. **Lexi Banda** became an immediate impact player along the Cardinals' backline last season, starting all 18 games and helping to solidify a defense that finished the year with a 2.84 goals-against-average in conference play and a 2.18 GAA overall. Banda and the Cardinals open the year with five straight non-conference contests before opening the MIAC schedule at home against St. Kate's on September 17.

Concordia finished 7-8-3 overall last season. Rising senior and 2018 All-MIAC pick **Kalli Baarstad** enjoyed a career-year offensively, scoring a team-best 10 goals to go along with four assists. Three of those goals were game-winners and two came against conference opponents. Baarstad also had at least one point in seven of the team's 11 conference games, scoring goals in five of those contests. Highlighting Concordia's non-conference slate to open the season is the annual Cobber Invite on the first full weekend in September, which includes non-conference matches against Northland and 2018 NCAA Tournament qualifier Northwestern-St. Paul.

Hamline was held to a 4-12-2 mark in 2018 but returns its top eight scorers from last fall, including honorable mention All-MIAC forward **Ciara Gregory**. The rising senior led Hamline with nine points on the year, including four goals, which tied for the team-high. Hamline opens the 2019 campaign on the west coast with a pair of non-conference contests in Spokane, Wash. against Whitworth and Whitman before returning home to play the first conference game of the year against Macalester on September 9.

Complete 2019 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.

2019 MIAC Women's Soccer Preseason Coaches' Poll

Rank	Institution (First-Place Votes)	Total
T1.	Augsburg (6)	116
T1.	St. Thomas (6)	116
3.	Saint Benedict	91
4.	St. Catherine	86
5.	St. Olaf	78
6.	Gustavus	73
T7.	Carleton	57
T7.	Macalester	57
9.	Bethel	41
10.	Saint Mary's	33
11.	Concordia	24
12.	Hamline	20

2019 MIAC Women's Soccer Playoffs

The 2019 MIAC Women'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 Women's Soccer Tournament.

Odds and Ends

-Five of the 12 United Soccer Coaches All-North Region selections from the MIAC in 2018 (Augsburg's **Ashley St. Aubin** and **Emily Chapman**, Bethel's **Rachel Waterman**, Saint Benedict's **Megan Thompson**, and St. Olaf's **Claire Bash**) will return to the pitch in 2019.

-Two new faces will patrol the sidelines this season, as **Ben Linder** is set to take over the Bethel program and **Whitney Frary** prepares to lead St. Olaf. Linder - an assistant for the Bethel men's program for three years and the women's team for one - was introduced as the Royals' new head coach in May after Amanda Maxwell announced her resignation to accept a teaching position in Ecuador. Frary came to Northfield in March after three seasons as an assistant at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. A two-time All-America selection at William Smith College, Frary replaces Rachael Sushner, who moved on to Trinity College in February after three seasons at St. Olaf.

-Augsburg forward **Ashley St. Aubin** and Gustavus goalkeeper **Ashley Becker** have each been named First Team All-Conference three times. Only 15 women on record have received four All-MIAC honors, with the most recent being St. Thomas' Mallory DeBoom (2015-18). The MIAC has not had two four-time All-Conference honorees in the same class since Macalester's Annie Borton and St. Olaf's Kelsey Watt in 2006. St. Olaf's **Claire Bash** is the only other multi-time All-Conference selection returning to the field this season. Bash will have the opportunity to become the 55th woman in conference history to earn at least three All-MIAC honors in a career if she does so in 2019.

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 42-page MIAC Women's Soccer Record Book contains annual Conference championship information, year-by-year standings, all-time award winners, individual and team records, NCAA Playoff history, 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 Women'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>.