

2008 MIAC Baseball Season Preview

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2008 MIAC Baseball Season Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. -- The more things change in the MIAC, the more things stay the same. At least that is what it appears with this year's baseball season. While a handful of teams are looking to break into the playoff picture this season, according to the preseason coaches' poll, it might be more of the same by the time the postseason gets into full swing.

St. Thomas, who last year tied for the conference title, is poised to extend its record five straight MIAC championships. Coach Dennis Denning's team, who is ranked in one national poll as high as 13th, return a strong nucleus from last year that includes eight of the starting position players, as well as six of their top eight pitchers. Catcher Matt Pexa, who is on at least one organizations pre-season All-American team, leads the offense that will also include senior shortstop Mark Boland and junior Louie Salmen. The pitching staff also includes a number of experienced arms. Seniors Lonnie Robinson and Chris Bullis, along with juniors Dan Leslie and Erik Olson will look to lead an experienced staff with its sights set on another regular season championship.

In order to keep it's streak alive, St. Thomas will most likely again have to contend with their fellow co-champions from 2007, St. Olaf. Despite losing the top of it's batting order, Coach Matt McDonald can be confident his team, which returns it's entire pitching staff, will not drop off this season. The staff is anchored by a pair of two-time All-MIAC pitchers – Paul Johnson and Todd Mathison. Mathison returns after an arm injury forced him to miss the second half of the 2007 season, but his healthy return will no doubt make St. Olaf a contender again this season. Offensively, St. Olaf will have a new look in many spots, but shortstop Josh Maus, who lead the MIAC in hitting last year will anchor an offense that will also include senior infielder Luke Gagnon and Mathison, who when not pitching will see extended time in the infield.

Relying on strong pitching and young talented hitting will also be the formula for Saint John's. Head coach Jerry Haugen will lead a team that will be looking to make its second straight post-season appearance. Leading the way on the mound will be a group of seniors that includes first team All-MIAC selection T.J. Nelson, Dusty Wilfahrt, Adam Johnson and junior closer Case Paxton. Saint John's will need to replace their top two hitters from last season, but will do so with a core group of seniors that includes third baseman Matt Meyer, shortstop John Heinbigner and second baseman Ryan Sufka. Most of the line-up will be filled with talented role players from last season as well as a handful of freshman who will be relied on to replace the talent that was lost from last season.

If the early polls are correct, Gustavus Adolphus will again make the post-season. On paper, it is easy to see why. Mike Carroll's team returns eight starting position players and five of its top pitchers. Gustavus returns three of its four infielders from a year ago. Junior shortstop Mike DesLauriers, junior second baseman Nate Ruff and senior first baseman Pat Siering anchor a veteran infield that should be one of the best in the conference. The outfield is also ripe with experience with all three starters returning including lead off hitter Tyler Kaus who hit .400 last season. Gustavus also has a veteran pitching staff with three starters and two relievers back from last season. Senior starter Dave Wold and senior reliever Charlie Cicalello will be counted on to eat up innings and lead the pitching staff.

The Hamline Pipers, under the direction of head coach Jason Verdugo, will look to return back to the MIAC Playoffs again in 2008. The Pipers will be led at the plate by two-time All-MIAC performer Andrew Bennett. Bennett hit .366 with 10 home runs and 29 RBI in 2007. He will make the move from shortstop to outfield for his senior season. Senior pitcher and outfielder Josh Roiger will be Hamline's pitching ace in 2008. Roiger worked 69 2/3 innings last year, struck out 56, and only walked 14 on the season. He finished 2007 with a 5-2 record and a 3.23 ERA. The senior leadership of Bennett and Roiger will need to mix with a talented incoming group of players in order for the Pipers to excel in 2008.

Augsburg will be looking to disrupt a reunion of sorts from last year's playoffs and move into the top four. While Coach Keith Bateman only returns four starting hitters from last year's team, he should be able to fall back on an experienced pitching staff. Nine of the top twelve pitchers are back lead by junior Jason Kickhafer who led the staff in nearly all pitching statistical categories last year and sophomore Sam Weber. Backstopping this experienced staff as well as leading the offensive attack will be All-MIAC catcher sophomore Craig Henry. Henry led Augsburg in nearly all offensive categories and was solid behind the plate. Supporting Henry in the line-up will be Rick Anderson who will move from the outfield to first base this year, Jeff Stomberg, one of the top defensive outfielders in the conference and Mike Zaun, who in addition to patrolling the outfield will also see time at DH.

As one of the youngest teams in the conference last year, Concordia hopes that the experience gained in 2007 will translate into more wins in 2008. Catcher Kyle Johnson will no doubt have a major say in this season's success. He led the team in nearly all offensive categories last year and will be counted on to help Concordia's young pitching staff. Senior outfielder Matt Youngquist and sophomore second baseman Jake Krause both hovered around .300 last year and hope to do the same in 2008. Depth will be the strength of Coach Bucky Burgau's pitching staff. The ace of the staff is Scott Schumacher who led the team in innings pitched and wins. In addition to his pitching duties, he will also be spending time at first base when not on the mound. Following Schumacher to the mound will be a group of first and second year players. Eddie Massee, Andrew Skow-Anderson and Jake Torrison will likely be filling out the rotation. The starters will be supported by a young group of relief pitchers that includes no seniors and only one junior.

Bethel University hopes experience will translate into wins in 2008. The pitching staff is deep and experienced. They are led by captains John Buteyn and Isaac Hamilton, but will also get contributions from senior Ethan Formo, junior Travis Adams and sophomore Kyle McCracken. Leading the way at the plate will be captain and MIAC honorable mention third baseman Brandon Carr, senior first baseman Dana Hegman and senior shortstop Tyler Kramer. Whether or not Bethel can overcome the loss of eight seniors off of last year's team will be the key to this season's success.

Macalester coach Matt Parrington will be looking for key reserves and new faces to lead them onto the field and lead them up the standings this season. The pitching staff will be lead by All-MIAC sophomore James Murrey, who ranked second in the conference in strikeouts, and All-MIAC selection senior John Simkins. Behind the top two, Eric Robinson hopes to put last year's injuries behind him and take up the third spot in Macalester's rotation. Simkins also will see time in the outfield as he enters his last year with a career batting average of .322. Joining him at the plate and looking to lead the offensive attack will be sophomore Nate Wilson-Traisman, the team's .300 hitting shortstop and Cody Ching who will be splitting time between first and second base.

Saint Mary's will be banking on its core of experienced seniors to lead the way and build on last year's season ending sweep over Concordia. They will have to do it without last year's best player, Nick Winecke, who is now the first base coach. Those core players include: Kevin Black, Brady Knudsen, Mike Mitchell, Satoshi Hayashi, Ryan Lynch and David Krieger.

No one in the conference will be relying on first year players as much as Carleton. Half of the roster is comprised of rookies. The unquestioned leader of the team will be its lone senior, All-MIAC outfielder Doug Sylvester. Sylvester will also see time as the closer on the pitching staff in addition to his outfield duties. The ace of the staff is Ethan Guevin who was one of the conference leaders in ERA. Like Sylvester, Guevin will be pulling double duty at the plate; he was fifth on the team in batting average and RBIs. Rob Trettin, last year's team leader in average, extra base hits and RBIs, will again man the outfield and wreak havoc on the bases as one of the team leaders in steals.

MIAC Preseason Coaches Poll: 1. St. Thomas, 2. St. Olaf, 3. Saint John's, 4. Gustavus, 5. Hamline, 6. Augsburg, 7. Concordia, 8. Bethel, 9. Macalester, 10. Saint Mary's, 11. Carleton.

2008 MIAC Playoffs: Top four teams (double elimination) - Friday - Sunday, May 9-11 at Dundas and Northfield Parks (Hosted by Carleton and St. Olaf)

Augsburg

Coch: Keith Bateman (5th season)

2007 Finish: Tied 5th (10-10 MIAC, 18-19 overall)

Augsburg Athletes to Watch
Craig Henry (C)
Jeff Stomberg (OF)
Jason Kickhafer (P/INF)
Sam Weber (P)
Rick Andersen (INF)
Mike Zaun (OF/DH)

Augsburg Season Preview
Depth will be the key to the fortunes for the Augsburg College baseball team in 2008. But experience, which often is naturally paired with depth, may be the biggest question mark for the Auggies this season.
"This is the most athletic group I've had here, and our deepest as well," said Augsburg head coach Keith Bateman, entering his fifth season as the Auggies' mentor. "We can really roll out a bunch of guys. We're deep at every position, but it's also our least experienced group. Out of our 249 innings pitched, we return 209, so that's great. But out of our 1,008 at-bats, we only return 447, which is 44 percent. It shows the inexperience that we will have."
Of the nine position players (including the designated hitter), just four starters return from an Auggie squad that went 18-19 overall, 10-10 in Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference play last season. However, nine of the 12 pitchers who saw varsity action last year are back, which gives Bateman and his coaching staff confidence that the Auggies can contend for a spot in the four-team MIAC's postseason playoffs for the first time since 2005.
"We have the pitching depth, we have the athletic ability and baseball savvy on the field to make a legitimate run at the MIAC tournament," Bateman said. "Our pitching depth is our key. Whether or not they go out and perform on gameday will be another question. But we definitely have the depth there. My biggest concern for the upcoming season is how we play defensively in tight situations, and how do we swing the bat. Those are big things."
Nine pitchers return to the Auggie lineup, which accounted for 33 of the team's 37 starts last season. Collectively, Auggie pitchers compiled a 5.15 earned-run average and .288 opponent batting average last season, while striking out 157 against 100 walks, numbers that should improve with another year of experience under the players' belts.
Jason Kickhafer (JR, Cottage Grove, Minn./Park HS) led the team in appearances (12), starts (nine) and strikeouts (37), while leading the team with a 3.16 ERA, opponent batting average (.224) and victories (4-4 record), in his first year with the Auggies after transferring from St. John's. He also started 14 games at second base last season. Sam Weber (SO, Arden Hills, Minn./Mounds View HS) shined last season with a 3-1 record, 4.60 ERA and 31 strikeouts, allowing opponents a .269 batting average.

Jon-Eric Urseth (JR, Golden Valley, Minn./Robbinsdale Armstrong HS) moved from catcher to pitcher last season and had a solid season, producing a 4.76 ERA and three victories in six starts, along with three complete games. Alex Glasenapp (SO, Minneapolis, Minn./South HS) worked primarily in relief last year, with two starts in nine appearances, but put together a 4.79 ERA with 18 strikeouts..

Chris Purcell (SO, Northfield, Minn.) started six games in nine appearances as a first-year pitcher last year, with a 4.88 ERA and 13 strikeouts. Brian Olson (JR, Cottage Grove, Minn./Park HS) also had an improved campaign last year, with a .411 ERA in six appearances. David Rasmussen (SO, Circle Pines, Minn./Centennial HS) and Alex Gustafson (JR, Anoka, Minn.) saw limited varsity action last year, but will be counted on to produce innings this season, Bateman noted.

One of the key players to fill the stopper role will be Shawn Sanders (JR, St. Charles, Minn.), who appeared in nine games last season, eight as a middle reliever, with a 4.67 ERA.

In the infield, key among the returning starters will be catcher Craig Henry (SO, Lino Lakes, Minn./Centennial HS), who was one of only two first-year players among the 27 players selected to the All-MIAC first team last season. Henry hit a team-high .395 last season, finishing with team highs of 17 RBI, 15 doubles, two triples, two home runs and a .614 slugging percentage. Defensively, Henry had a .960 fielding percentage, with just seven errors in 177 chances. He also threw out 12 baserunners trying to steal.

Henry suffered a big scare this past fall, when he suffered a severe neck injury in Augsburg's preseason football scrimmage. But he has fully recovered from the injury and has shown no ill effects, Bateman said, giving the team confidence for the performance of one of its key leaders.

Bryan Ludwig (SR, Woodbury, Minn.), who saw action in three varsity games last year, will compete for the backup role at catcher with newcomers Ryan Kaulbars (FY, Bloomington, Minn./Kennedy HS) and Bryant Nordby (FY, Brownnton, Minn./McLeod West HS).

At first base, Bateman will move Rick Andersen (SR, Plymouth, Minn./Robbinsdale Armstrong HS) to the role from the outfield. He hit .367 last season with five doubles, four RBI and a .531 slugging percentage. Behind him will be Shea Sajevic (SO, Hastings, Minn.) and newcomers Tim Garnhardt (SO, Jordan, Minn.) and Cole Oosterhuis (FY, White Bear Lake, Minn.).

The middle of the Auggie infield will be filled by a variety of players, Bateman said. Returner Ryan Stockhaus (SR, Columbia Heights, Minn./De La Salle HS) will battle for time at second base with newcomers Donald Blunt (FY, Richfield, Minn.) and Nick Vavra (FY, Minnetonka, Minn./Hopkins HS). And at shortstop, Blunt and Kickhafer will also figure into the mix, along with Eric Olson (SO, New Prague, Minn.).

Mark Pederson (SR, Lexington, Minn./Centennial HS) started 20 games last season at third base, and is the likely candidate to return. Al Davis (FY, St. Paul, Minn./Cretin-Derham Hall HS) will battle for the position, along with fellow newcomer Mason Holmquist (FY, Prior Lake, Minn.).

Jeff Stomberg (SR, Lino Lakes, Minn./Centennial HS) has developed a reputation as one of the top defensive outfielders in the MIAC, and will return to his centerfield position to anchor the Auggie outfield. In his three seasons as an Auggie, Stomberg has a .983 fielding percentage, with just four errors in 230 career chances. At the plate, he hit .271 last year with 10 RBI and a .354 on-base percentage.

James Panning (JR, Gibbon, Minn./Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop HS) transferred to Augsburg last season and appeared in 17 games, primarily as a pinch hitter and defensive replacement. He appears to be the top candidate to fill one of the corner outfield spots, along with Derek Williamson (SO, St. Francis, Minn.) and pitchers Rasmussen and Brian Olson. Newcomers Mitch Kluver (FY, Alexandria, Minn./Jefferson HS) and Taylor Legeros (FY, Minneapolis, Minn./Edina HS) could also fit in the outfield mix.

Mike Zaun (SR, Mendota Heights, Minn./Henry Sibley HS) will also appear in the outfield discussion, but will likely fill the designated hitter role for the second straight season. A co-captain with Stomberg, Zaun hit .304 last season with 13 RBI and a .362 slugging percentage. Pitcher Sanders will also contend for the DH role, Bateman noted.

Bethel

Coach: Greg Indlecoffer (6th season)

2007 Finish: 7th (8-12 MIAC, 18-22 overall)

Bethel Athletes to Watch

Brandon Carr (Sr., 3B, Fergus Falls, Minn.)

Dana Hegman (Sr., 1B, Eden Prairie, Minn.)

Tyler Kramer (Sr., SS, Maplewood, Minn.)

John Buteyn (Sr., RHP, Eden Prairie, Minn.)

Isaac Hamilton (Sr., RHP, Chaska, Minn.)

Travis Adams (Jr., LHP, Chanhassen, Minn.)

Bethel Season Preview

Bethel's baseball team comes into the 2008 season looking to move up in the conference standings after an up and down 2007 season. The Royals finished 18-22 overall and 8-12 in conference, placing them in the middle of the MIAC standings. Despite some strong individual performances, inconsistent team play summarized the '07 season and Coach Indlecoffer will look to regroup and refocus his team as they anticipate the upcoming season. Indlecoffer states, "The adversity we faced last season builds team character and resolve... we will regroup, learn from our mistakes and be ready to play a tough '08 schedule."

The program seeks to play an aggressive schedule against some of the best competition in their region as well as in the nation while on their spring trip in Florida. The Royals said goodbye to 8 seniors and now look ahead to the challenge of filling in the gaps. The '08 Royals do have a solid core of returning players to anchor the squad. The coaching staff is encouraged with the type of physical talent and teachable attitudes demonstrated by the returning players and new recruits. These character qualities help to provide a solid foundation from which to build upon. Indlecoffer adds, "At the core, this program and team is all about transformation...both physically in the development of our God-given baseball skills as well as spiritually in the development of our attitude, outlook and love for the game and our fellow teammates."

Leading the way on the mound will be a pair of senior team captains and veteran RHP's John Buteyn (Eden Prairie, Minn.) and Isaac Hamilton (Chaska, Minn.). They will be joined by veteran senior RHP Ethan Formo (Granite Falls, Minn.), junior LHP Travis Adams (Chanhassen, Minn.) and sophomore RHP Kyle McCracken (Johnston, Iowa). Other returnees looking to compete for some mound time including juniors RHP Ben Turnwall (Burnsville, Minn.) and Adam Beck (Blackduck, Minn.) along with sophomore Matt Jollie (Shoreview, Minn.). Newcomers to the program looking to make an impact include transfer RHP John Slick (River Falls, Wis.) and RHP Matt Johnson (White Bear Lake HS).

Sophomore Stephen Krueger (Jordan, Minn.) looks to step in to anchor the Royals behind the plate. He will be pushed by a trio of promising first year catchers in Erik Anderson (Mounds View HS), Kirk Darling (Portage North HS, Mich.), and Chris Harrell (Mound-Westonka HS).

Senior shortstop Tyler Kramer (Maplewood, Minn.) and senior second basemen Clint Nelson (Monticello, Minn.) will provide solid defense up the middle for the Royals. Junior Dustin Littlefield (Rockford, Minn.) along with sophomores Bob Tokar (Elk River, Minn.), Tim Churchill (Mt. Prospect, Minn.), and Mark Therrien (Spring Lake Park, Minn.) will provide solid back-up and round out the middle infield core.

Two veteran players return to the corner positions. Returning to his duties at first base is senior Dana Hegman (Eden Prairie, Minn.) with back up provided by sophomore Matt Harten (Andover, Minn.). All-Conference & All-Midwest region player in '06 and honorable mention in '07 and team captain Brandon Carr (Fergus Falls, Minn.) returns to his position at third base. Sophomore Kyle McCracken and first year player Alex Hinseth (Andover, Minn.) will look to develop and provide solid backup.

Anchoring the outfield will be senior centerfielder Kris Pulford (Richfield, Minn.). He will be joined by sophomore standout Tim Oesterlin (Rochester, Minn.) in right field, and junior standout Ryan Doheny (Anoka, Minn.) in left field. Second year players Sean Flaherty (Shoreview, Minn.), Rob Lang (Johnston, Iowa) and transfer John Slick will look to push this talented and veteran core of outfielders.

The Royals open the season in the Metrodome on February 27th as they play host to Wartburg College (IA). They will also host Elmhurst College (IL) and UW-Oshkosh in the dome before traveling to Port Charlotte (FL) area in late March for nonconference action. Bethel opens the MIAC schedule at the University of St. Thomas on March 29th.

Carleton

Coach: Aaron Rushing (3rd season)

2007 Finish: 11th (3-17 MIAC, 11-22 overall)

Carleton Athletes to Watch

Doug Sylvester (Sr., OF/LHP, Fargo, N.D./North)
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Ethan Guevin (Jr., INF/RHP, Davis, Calif.)

Russ Fujisawa (So., INF, Riverwoods, Ill/Deerfield)
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Rob Trettin (Jr., OF, Superior, Wis.)
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Jay Melson (Jr., INF, Cottage Grove, Minn./Park)

Dan Matthews (So., RHP, Tulsa, Okla./Holland Hall)

Carleton Season Preview

<p>The Carleton baseball team as a whole will once again be very young, as half the roster is rookies. The Knights, though, have several 'young veterans' returning.</p>
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<p>The lone senior on the team, outfielder Doug Sylvester (Fargo, N.D./North), was an All-MIAC performer last year as he hit .327 with a .405 on-base percentage. He also made seven starts on the hill, but this year is expected to move to the closer role on the pitching staff. Head coach Aaron Rushing will also lean on juniors Ethan Guevin (Davis, Calif.), Jay Melson (Cottage Grove, Minn./Park) and Rob Trettin (Superior, Wis.)</p>

<p>Geuvin will be the Knights' ace again this season after going 4-5 with a 3.32 ERA a year ago. One of the top pitchers in the conference, he ranked fifth in the MIAC with 53 strikeouts over 57.0 innings while limiting opponents to a .260 average. Among hurlers with as many innings, he owned the league's sixth-best ERA. He also batted .255 and tied for fifth on the Knights in hits and RBI last season.</p>

<p>Melson will man the hot corner once more for Carleton and is the Knights' biggest power threat. He hit .305 with a team-best three home runs, ranking him 10th in the MIAC. His batting average tied for ninth in the conference among players with as many at bats.</p>

<p>A dynamic offensive player, Trettin paced the team with a .330 batting average, 12 extra-base hits, 26 RBI and a .521 slugging percentage. The outfielder is also a threat on the basepaths, swiping eight bases a year ago.</p>

<p>Pitching will once again be crucial for the Knights to compete with nationally ranked opponents. Dan Matthews (So./Tulsa, Okla./Holland Hall) won a pair of conference games as a rookie last season and joins Guevin at the top of the Knights rotation.</p>
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Concordia

Coach: Bucky Burgau (30th season)

2007 Finish: 8th (7-13 MIAC, 11-23 overall)

Concordia Athletes to Watch

Kyle Johnson (Jr., C, Cambridge, Minn./Cambridge-Isanti)

Jake Krause (So., 2B, Moorhead, Minn.)

Scott Schumacher (Jr., RHP, Thompson, N.D.)

Matt Youngquist (Sr., OF, Brooklyn Park, Minn./Champlin Park)

Concordia Season Preview

Concordia head coach Bucky Burgau begins his 30th season at the helm for the Cobbers and the 2008 edition has a chance to be one of the most exciting in recent history. The elder statesmen in the MIAC, Burgau will need all of his coaching mettle as he will have a team that is long on youthful exuberance and talent and short on playoff-situation experience.

Last year the Cobbers' were one of the youngest teams in the MIAC and their inexperience showed down the stretch. This season Burgau will be hoping that the experience gained in 2007 will lead to a return trip to the MIAC postseason. The Cobbers will have at least four starting freshmen or sophomores at the position spots and will have four starting pitchers that are in their first or second seasons of play. Despite the youthful appearance on the outside, Burgau remains optimistic as he cites that his squad is long on baseball knowledge and might be one of the most athletic teams in recent history.

Another reason for the upswing in hope is the undisputed leadership of junior catcher Kyle Johnson (Cambridge, Minn./Cambridge-Isanti HS). Johnson led the team in hitting, home runs, RBI's, slugging percentage, on-base percentage and total bases in 2007. He finished with a .360 average and had a .540 slugging percentage. He was named to the MIAC All-Conference First Team last year and is one of the top returning players in the league. His leadership behind the dish will help the Cobbers' young pitching corps. He will also be called upon to add the power to a CC lineup that will look to create more runs than in years past and will be a tough out from top to bottom.

Leading the field players will be senior outfielder Matt Youngquist (Brooklyn Park, Minn./Champlin Park HS) and sophomore secondbaseman Jake Krause (Moorhead, Minn.). Youngquist is a three-year starter who hit a career-high .305 last year. He led the team in walks and was second in RBI's last year and will be penciled into the No.3 spot in the batting order for most of the year. Krause will be the squad's leadoff hitter and has outstanding range at shortstop. Last year he hit .297 and led the team in stolen bases and was second in walks. A year of experience will help Krause set the table at the top of the order and give CC a legitimate No.1 hitter. In the field he had a .921 fielding percentage and made several outstanding plays ranging to his left and right.

The rest of the infield will be littered with former shortstops. The third base duties will be headed by sophomore Tyler Doll (Perham, Minn.). The diminutive Doll played mostly at second base last year but his ability to cover ground and soft hands will give CC an outstanding left side of the infield in 2008. The right side of the infield will be the biggest question mark for Burgau. The Cobbers will need to replace three-year starter Scott Halupczok who was lost to graduation. Halupczok led the team in fielding percentage last year and was an outstanding defensive player who could corral any errant throws by the CC infield. Junior Scott Schumacher (Thompson, N.D.) will be the leading candidate to fill the spot. When not on the mound, Schumacher is one of the top hitters for Concordia. Last year he was limited in his at-bats because of his pitching duties but he has the ability to be one of the top hitters on the team and will be slotted into one of the top five spots in the batting order. The second base spot could be filled by freshman Dan Wackler (Buffalo, Minn.). Wackler is a slick-fielding athlete who will give Concordia an outstanding middle infield.

In the outfield, the Cobbers will have a pair of seniors and a newcomer. Youngquist will get the nod in left field, while fellow senior Drew Zimmerman (Fargo, N.D./Fargo South HS) will be the opening day starter in center field. Zimmerman saw limited playing time last year but will be aided by the regular spot in the lineup. The right field competition is being led by sophomore Freddy Weiss (Baxter, Minn./Brainerd HS). Weiss returns to the Cobbers after taking three years off after his freshman season in 2004. In his first year he showed power at the plate and an outstanding arm in the field. He was fifth on the team in slugging percentage in 2004 and had 10 total bases in 24 plate appearances. Besides Youngquist, Zimmerman and Weiss look for Brady Harms (So., Hawley, Minn.) and Michael Carlson (Fr., Sartell, Minn.) to also see time in the outfield.

On the mound, Burgau will have one of his deepest pitching staffs in recent years. He will have 5-6 legitimate starters and a wide variety of options coming out of the bullpen. The No.1 starting spot will be filled by Schumacher. Last year he was second on the team in innings pitched and wins. He will be helped by a full year on the mound and with concentrating solely on baseball after not going out for football in the fall. After Schumacher, CC could fill the next three spots with a trio of sophomores and freshmen. Eddie Massee (So., Appleton, Minn./Lac Qui Parle Valley HS) will have a chance to earn the No.2 spot. He started four games in his freshman season last year and improved with every start. He only let up four earned runs

in his last two starts and went eight innings and struck out eight to earn his first collegiate win against Macalester. Andrew Skow-Anderson (Pelican Rapids, Minn.) and Jake Torrison (Plymouth, Minn./Wayzata HS) are the top two freshmen starters that will be fighting for the No.3 and 4 spot on the staff. Both have outstanding high school resumes and the key will be how quickly they adjust to college hitters. One of the wild cards for the Cobber pitching staff will be freshman Phil Moenkedick (Perham, Minn.). Moenkedick was the top athlete on the Cobber wrestling team and will need to play catch up after participating in the NCAA Division III national Wrestling Meet. If he can get his arm up to speed by the start of April, he could give Burgau another solid left-handed starting option.

The relief corps will have a similar look as the starters as a single junior will be called upon to lead a group of sophomores and freshmen. Junior Nick Petro (Alexandria, Minn./Jefferson HS) and sophomores Chris Fellows (Ortonville, Minn.), Matt Green (Dilworth, Minn./D-G-F HS) and Adam Johnson (Pelican Rapids, Minn) all have experience from 2007 and all have shown glimpses of being able to stretch long relief appearances together. A pair of freshmen will be added to the relief mix. Randy Syrstad (Thompson, N.D.) and Zach Weller (Sauk Centre, Minn.) both have the raw talent to give the Cobbers innings in 2008.

If Burgau can get quality starts from his young pitching staff then the Cobbers have a chance to make a lot of noise in 2008. The team will get their first opportunity to shine at the end of March when they head to Arizona for a 10-game spring break trip. The trip to the southwest marks the first time Concordia has traveled to Arizona for their annual spring trek in the history of the program. A school-first season start could pave the way for the team’s fifth trip to the conference playoffs and first since the 2005 season.

Gustavus
Coach: Mike Carroll (12th season)
2007 Finish: 4th (14-6 MIAC, 21-15 overall)

Gustavus Athletes to Watch
Mike DesLauriers (Jr., SS, Minnetonka, Minn.)
Nate Ruff (Jr., 2B, Bloomington, Minn.)
Pat Siering (Sr., 1B, Eden Prairie, Minn.)
Dave Wold (Sr., SP, Woodbury, Minn.)
Charlie Cicalello (Sr., RP, St. Paul, Minn.)

Gustavus Season Preview

The Gustavus baseball team returns eight field starters, three starting pitchers, and its top two relievers from a team that finished 21-15 overall and placed fourth in the MIAC with a record of 14-6 last year. In addition, three of those returning field starters were All-Conference selections including shortstop Mike DesLauriers, second baseman Nate Ruff, and first baseman Pat Siering. The team will need to replace All-America performer Tony Konicek, however Coach Mike Carroll feels this team has the experience and depth to be considered one of the top teams in the conference this season.

The infield will be anchored by shortstop Mike DesLauriers, second baseman Nate Ruff, and first baseman Pat Siering. All three are solid all-around players. DesLauriers hit .415 and finished second in the league in hits (33) and runs scored (26), while Siering hit .353 and ranked fifth in the MIAC in RBI (24) and Ruff hit .320 and had a .955 fielding percentage. Veteran catcher Shea Roehrkaase (Sr., Jackson Hole, Wyo.) also returns after hitting .394 last season. The question mark in the infield will be who will step in at third base after the graduation of Tony Konicek. The likely candidates to fill the opening are sophomores Tory Herman (Shoreview, Minn.) and Willy Hanson (St. Peter, Minn.).

The outfield returns all three starters including senior rightfielder Tyler Kaus (St. James, Minn.), sophomore centerfielder Andrew Woitas (Sleepy Eye, Minn.), and sophomore leftfielder Eric Bigham (Robbinsdale, Minn.). Kaus, the Gusties leadoff hitter posted a .400 batting average last season, while Bigham and Woitas made solid contributions as freshman. Bigham hit .342 and Woitas led all Gustie outfielders in assists with 16. Coach Mike Carroll has solid depth in the outfield as senior Robby Wiens (Burnsville, Minn.) and sophomore Spencer Campion (Plymouth, Minn.) return after playing regularly last season and hitting .262 and .253 respectively.

Pitching will once again be the key to the Gusties success in 2008 and Coach Carroll will rely on three returning starting pitchers and two relievers. The three starters are Dave Wold, who posted a record of 3-2 in seven starts a year ago, Kraig Olson (Sr., Blooming Prairie, Minn.), who posted a record of 1-0 in eight starts, and Brandon Knoll (Jr., Princeton, Minn.), who posted a record of 3-3 in six starts. The Gusties were blessed with solid pitching out of the bullpen last season and the top two relievers return in Chad Schnettler (Sr., Sartell, Minn.) and Charlie Cicalello (Sr., St. Paul, Minn.). Schnettler posted a record of 1-2 in 13 appearances and posted an ERA of 2.45, while Cicalello was 4-1 in 14 appearances with two saves and a 2.81 ERA.

Hamline

Coach: Jason Verdugo (7th season)

2007 Finish: Tied 5th (10-10 MIAC, 22-18 overall)

Hamline Athletes to Watch
N/A

Hamline Season Preview
N/A

Macalester

Coach: Matt Parrington (9th season)

2007 Finish: 10th (5-15 MIAC, 14-23 overall)

Macalester Athletes to Watch
John Simkins (Jr., P/OF, Galesburg, Ill.)
James Murrey (So. P, Western Springs, Ill./Lyons Township)
Nate Wilson-Traisman (So., SS, Eugene, Ore./South Eugene)
Cody Ching (Sr., IF, Olympia, Wash.)

Macalester Season Preview

The Scots are optimistic for a successful campaign ahead under ninth-year year coach Matt Parrington. Macalester appears to have a nice blend of experience and youth, and are looking to make a move up in the MIAC standings. Coach Parrington will look for newcomers and reserves from last year to step into key roles right away as the Scots must replace a big senior class from a year ago, which included five four-year regulars in the lineup.

Mac features a pair of talented pitchers at the top of the rotation in James Murrey (So., Western Springs, Ill. / LyonsTownship) and John Simkins (Sr., Galesburg, Ill.). Murrey was one of just two freshman selected to the All-MIAC squad after ranking second in the league with 39 strikeouts in 38 innings. On the season, Murrey went 6-4 with a 2.77 ERA. He fanned 62 batters and walked just 19.

Simkins was named to the All-MIAC squad as a sophomore as a pitcher/outfielder, and the crafty lefty joins the hard-throwing right-hander Murrey to give the Scots a solid one-two punch to build around. Simkins has pitched 134 innings through his first three seasons at Mac, striking out 86 batters while walking just 24 (1.3 per seven innings). The smooth-swinging lefty is also a good defensive outfielder and should bat in the meat of the order. Simkins enters his senior year with a .322 career batting average.

Macalester’s daily lineup will feature young infielders Nate Wilson-Traisman (So., Eugene, Ore. / South Eugene), Devin English (So., Bethesda, Md. / DeMatha) and Jason Friedman (So., New York, N.Y. / The Browning School). Wilson-Traisman is an athletic shortstop with a strong bat who hit .304 with 18 RBI as a rookie, Cody Ching (Sr., Olympia,Wash.) also joins the infield and will play both first and second base. Utility player Jeremy Velasquez (Sr., Ft. Stockton,Tex.) will play both in the infield and outfield, and Trevor Miehe (Fy., Holmen, Wis.) will also compete for infield duty.

Macalester graduated both its catchers from last year and will ask Joe Borer (Sr., St. Paul, Minn. / Central) to take over after hitting .305 in ‘07. Borer, along with Ching and Adam Kent (Sr., Madison, Wis. / West), are all expected to contribute at first base and designated hitter. Robert Engel (So., Sunnysvale, Calif. / St. Lawrence) will also see action behind the plate. Candidates to flank Simkins in the outfield include Friedman, Velasquez, Will Chen (Fy., Edina, Minn.) and Robert De Meulenaere (Fy., Elk Grove Village, Ill. / Elk Grove).

Eric Robinson (So., San Francisco, Calif. / The Urban School) missed most of his rookie campaign with arm injuries, but is expected to bounce back and join the starting rotation behind Murrey and Simkins. Also expected to contribute to the mound staff are Engel, Brad Johnson (Jr., Mt. Laurel, N.J. / Lenape), Alex Ingram (Fy., Chicago, Ill. / Morgan Park Academy), Elliott Yodh (Fy., Merion, Pa. / Lower Merion) and Jack Cooper (Fy., Alexandria, Va. / T.C. Williams).

Saint John's

Coach: Jerry Haugen (31st season)
2007 Finish: 3rd (15-5 MIAC, 23-16 overall)

Saint John's Athletes to Watch

- T.J. Nelson (Sr., P, St. Louis Park, Minn.)
- Dusty Wilfahrt (Sr., P, Hanska, Minn./New Ulm Cathedral)
- Adam Johnson (Sr., P, Elbow Lake, Minn./West Central Area)
- Matt Meyer (Sr., 3B, Avon, Minn./Albany)
- John Heinbigner (Sr., SS, Stillwater, Minn.)
- Ryan Sufka (Sr., 2B, St. Joseph, Minn./Cathedral)

Saint John's Season Preview

The Saint John's University baseball team, comprised of a veteran pitching staff and young, talented hitters, looks to make its second consecutive MIAC playoff appearance in 2008. The Johnnies finished third in the MIAC with a 15-5 record and posted a 23-16 overall record.

Returning to the Johnnies pitching rotation are seniors T.J. Nelson (St. Louis Park, Minn./St. Louis Park), Dusty Wilfahrt (Hanska, Minn./New Ulm Cathedral) and Adam Johnson (Elbow Lake, Minn./West Central Area), as well as junior closer Case Paxton (Brooklyn Park, Minn./Osseo).

A third-team All-MIAC selection last season, Nelson led the SJU pitching staff with a 6-0 record in 54.2 innings pitched, including two complete games. Wilfahrt led SJU in starts with 10 (second in the MIAC) and posted a 5-3 record, allowing only 11 walks in 43.2 innings of work. Johnson led SJU in strikeouts with 32 in 40 innings pitched. Paxton made his debut in the closing role last season and finished with a 4-0 record with four saves and a 2.96 ERA (10th in the MIAC). Paxton led the MIAC in games finished (17) and was second in appearances (19) and walks (five).

Key senior position players returning for the Johnnies include third baseman Matt Meyer (Avon, Minn./Albany), shortstop John Heinbigner (Stillwater, Minn.) and second baseman Ryan Sufka (St. Joseph, Minn./St. Cloud Cathedral). Meyer batted .308 last season with nine doubles and 18 RBI. Sufka had a .306 batting average and a .963 fielding percentage. Heinbigner had a .287 average with five doubles, two triples and a home run, and led SJU last season with 109 assists (fourth in the MIAC) and a .930 fielding percentage.

The Johnnies will need to replace their top two hitters from last season due to graduation: All-America first baseman Jay Kasner and catcher Casey Haugen. Kasner led the Johnnies with a .390 batting average (10th in the MIAC), 53 hits (seventh in the MIAC), 10 doubles, four triples (sixth in the MIAC) and nine home runs (4th in MIAC). Kasner finished second in the MIAC in RBI (46), third in total bases (98) and fourth in slugging percentage (.721). Haugen was second on the team with a .319 batting average and a .490 on-base percentage, good for fifth in the MIAC. Haugen led the team with 26 walks (second in the MIAC) and 35 runs scored.

The Johnnies will also be looking to replace outfielders Brandon Royce-Diop, Shawn Schoenberg and Christian McPherson. Royce-Diop batted .304 with nine doubles and led the Johnnies with 10 stolen bases. Schoenberg posted a .289 batting average with seven doubles, five home runs and 21 RBI, while McPherson recorded seven doubles, one triple and two home runs.

The Johnnies' pitching staff will need to replace the loss of Josh Hollenhorst due to graduation. Hollenhorst was second on the team with 14 appearances (2-4 record), including seven starts, with three complete games and 52 innings pitched. Hollenhorst led the MIAC with 11 pickoffs on the year.

Head coach Jerry Haugen will have a number of suitable student-athletes to replace the five graduated starters. Junior Lincoln Haugen (St. Cloud, Minn./Apollo), senior Erik Ellingboe (Willmar, Minn.) and freshman Brian Skluzacek (Cold Spring, Minn./Rocori) are expected to compete for the starting job behind the plate. Haugen, who did not play last season, batted posted a .292 batting average in 23 games in 2006. Junior Mike Krempa (Burnsville, Minn./Holy Angels), along with freshmen Kyle Henkemeyer (Sauk Rapids, Minn./Sauk Rapids-Rice) and Will Bayuk (Cokato, Minn./Dassel-Cokato) will be in the mix at first base. Seniors Chace Pollock (Marshall, Minn.) and Brandon Wolf (Adrian, Minn.), sophomores Andrew Gurbada (Royalton, Minn.) and Nathaniel Jimenez (Trinidad, Colo./Holy Trinity), and freshman Aaron Traut (St. Cloud, Minn./Rocori) will all be vying for the three outfield vacancies this spring. Gurbada batted .289 in 14 games for the Johnnies last season.

Head coach Jerry Haugen will also look for freshmen shortstop Matt Butorac (Maple Grove, Minn.) and infielder/pitcher Brett Kramer (Baxter, Minn./Brainerd) to contribute immediately this season.

SJU will open its 40-game, regular-season schedule during its annual spring break trip March 16-24 in Chandler, Ariz. The Johnnies open the season with a doubleheader against Wisconsin-La Crosse March 17, and will play a total of 11 games in eight days. The Johnnies' first contest back in Minnesota will be a doubleheader against Wisconsin-Superior March 27 at the Metrodome. Saint John's has 11 home games scheduled this season and begins conference play on March 29 with a doubleheader against Macalester in Collegeville. The top four teams in the MIAC regular season standings qualify for the MIAC playoffs May 12-14 at Northfield and Dundas.

Haugen, SJU class of 1976, begins his 31st season as the Johnnies head coach in 2008. Haugen currently holds an overall record of 568-482-5 (.541), which places him in the top 25 on the NCAA Division III winningest active coaches list. Under Haugen, the Johnnies have had 14 winning seasons in the last 18 years.

Saint Mary's

Coach: Nick Whaley (11th season)

2007 Finish: 9th (6-14 MIAC, 10-21 overall)

Saint Mary's Athletes to Watch

Brady Knudsen (Sr., OF, Racine, Wis.)

Kevin Black (Sr., OF, Mahtomedi, Minn.)

Alex Schmidt (Jr., C, La Crosse, Wis.)

Saint Mary's Season Preview

Saint Mary's University baseball coach Nick Whaley couldn't fault his team for the effort put forth during the 2007 season. Unfortunately, the results didn't quite match that effort as SMU fell victim to countless late-inning rallies in settling for a 10-21 overall record.

The way the season ended, however, certainly made up for a lot of that heartache. SMU, down to its final at-bat, rallied from a 5-4 seventh-inning deficit to beat the Cobbers 6-5 in Game 1 of the teams' regular-season finale, then turned around and did themselves one better in the nightcap, scoring three seventh-inning runs to hand Concordia a second straight 6-5 setback.

"It's a crazy game, I think we've proved last year that nothing is ever certain until the final out is made," said Whaley.

"We battled all season — every game, no matter what the score, or what the situation, they went out there and battled."

The Cardinals will have to pick things up without their offensive leader, however, as Nick Winecke — SMU's lone all-conference selection in 2007 — has moved four steps to his left, from first base to the first base coach's box.

"Nick had a great senior year and his production on the field will certainly be missed," said Whaley. "But to have him (as an assistant coach) will certainly be a big plus."

So will a returning core that includes seniors Kevin Black, Brady Knudsen, Mike Mitchell, Satoshi Hayashi. Ryan Lynch and David Krieger.

"We've got a good group of seniors who have been through the wars," said Whaley. "They know what it takes to compete in this conference, and we'll be relying on their leadership — both on and off the field."

St. Olaf

Coach: Matt McDonald (14th season)

2007 Finish: Tied 1st (16-4 MIAC, 32-10 overall)

St. Olaf Athletes to Watch

Todd Mathison (Jr., P, Northfield, Minn.)

Paul Johnson (Sr., P, Hudson, Wis.)

Carson Jones (So., OF, Farmington, Minn.)

St. Olaf Season Preview

The 2008 St. Olaf baseball will try for its second straight and fifth conference title since 2000 under 14th-year head coach Matt McDonald.

McDonald, the reigning MIAC Coach of the Year, and his squad will have to replace the top four spots in the Oles' batting order after three graduated and Andrew Schmiesing signed with the Minnesota Twins after the hometown team took the outfield star in the 11th round of last year's MLB draft. Thankfully, the McDonald has a veteran pitching staff, a solid defense returning and substantial pieces to the offensive puzzle to fill his lineup card when the Oles open on February 26 in the Metrodome against Iowa Conference power Wartburg.

St. Olaf has its entire pitching staff returning this spring led by a pair of two-time All-MIAC hurlers — Paul Johnson and Todd Mathison.

Johnson (Sr., Hudson, Wis.) will return as one of the Oles' top starters. He led the MIAC in wins (8), strikeouts (65), was fourth in innings pitched (69.0) and had a team-best 13 appearances.

Mathison (Jr., Northfield, Minn.) who was a Third Team ABCA All-America pick as a first year, is 15-0 with five saves and a 1.72 ERA in his two years at St. Olaf. His 2007 season on the mound was cut short after he injured his throwing arm on April 21, but all indications show that he will be healthy to start 2008. Mathison led the MIAC in ERA (1.80) and opponents' batting average (.218) last year.

Joining Mathison and Johnson on staff is senior Andy Dimick (Northfield, Minn.) and junior Alex Sommer (Jr., Tonka Bay, Minn./Holy Family).

Dimick emerged as one of the best starters on staff last spring, going 5-1 in 11 appearances. He helped the Oles to two of their three postseason wins defeating St. Thomas in the MIAC Tournament and UW-Steven's Point at the NCAA Regional.

Sommer had a nice season in 2007, going 5-1 with a 3.00 ERA in 39-plus innings.

The Oles could also look to Alex Beckman (Jr., Jordan, Minn.) Beckman, too, filled innings (24.1) and collected two wins.

Paul Shrewsbury (Soph., St. Paul, Minn./Cretin Durham Hall) was magnificent appearances in his rookie season but he, like Mathison, injured his arm in mid April and was unable to complete the season. In five appearances, Shrewsbury was 3-0 with a 2.16 ERA and allowed an astounding no walks in 25 innings.

John Sopiwnik (Sr., Frederick, Wis./Cumberland) returns for his senior season after appearing 12 times, ten in relief last spring.

It's almost certain that the Oles won't replace Schmiesing's production from his second spot in the lineup, but McDonald has good options for slotting a quality glove and bat into the outfield.

Carson Jones (Soph., Farmington, Minn.) burst onto the scene in 2007, hitting .369 with five homers and nine doubles (.615 slugging pct.) and was a Third Team ABCA All-Midwest Region selection in his debut campaign. Jones' twin brother, Tyler (Soph., Farmington, Minn.), could fill one of the open outfield spots left by Schmiesing, leadoff man Brian Astry and the cleanup guy - designated hitter/outfielder Josh Schultheis.

The vacant spots could also be satisfied by a duo from Maple Grove - senior Anders Grinde or junior Corey Nelson. Each did well in limited at bats in 2007.

Josh Maus (Sr., Northfield, Minn.) had a breakout year in 2007 after filling in for an injured Mathison. Maus replaced Mathison and went on to lead the MIAC in hitting and was an all-conference pick for the first time in his career. He is the expected starter at short.

At third base, St. Olaf will have to replace one of its best, underrated and overshadowed players in school history - Chris Terrazas. Terrazas, a two-time team MVP and three-time All-MIAC and All-Region selection, was a senior last year when he hit .417 (4th in the MIAC) with 65 hits (2nd), 15 doubles (2nd), three homers and 46 RBI (2nd). Terrazas was also a mop at the third base, making only ten errors in almost a hundred chances.

McDonald and the Oles don't have a clear favorite to take over at the hot corner, but it could be one of last spring's middle infielders. Luke Gagnon (Sr., Howard Lake, Minn./Howard Lake-Waverly) played a solid second base last season - five errors in 167 chances - and could move to third. Gagnon had a good offensive year too, hitting .328 with 26 driven in.

Mathison, who was the starting shortstop until he injured his arm, could move somewhere else when he's not on the mound. He played first base in the NCAA Regional last spring and could play second or third as well.

Tyler Johnson (Jr., Chanhassen, Minn./Holy Family) will compete for the first base job. Johnson was the Oles' starting first basemen for almost all of 2006 and 2007. He hit .246 last season and has four career homers. Johnson, a hard-throwing righty, could also add depth out of the bullpen as a relief pitcher.

Pat Wadzinski (Jr., Hastings, Minn.) won the starting backstop job last year and is expected to do the same in 2008. Wadzinski was a strong defensive catcher in his -first year as the primary starter, throwing out a third of attempted stealers and making only two errors. The switch-hitter did a serviceable job at the plate too, hitting .262 with a homer. He walked 14 times against only ten strikeouts.

The Oles play two other series, besides the Feb. 26 opener against Wartburg, in the Metrodome before a six-day, ten-game trip in late March in Port Charlotte, Fla. The season's non-conference schedule also includes a home doubleheader against perennial NCAA participant St. Scholastica.

St. Olaf opens MIAC play on April 2 at Concordia College-Moorhead.

Coach: Dennis Denning (14th season)

2007 Finish: Tied 1st (16-4 MIAC, 34-12 overall)

St. Thomas Athletes to Watch

Mark Boland (Sr., SS, West St. Paul, Minn./Cretin-Derham Hall)

Chris Bullis (Sr., RHP/OF, Waconia, Minn.)

Dan Leslie (Jr., RHP/3B, West St. Paul, Minn./Henry Sibley)

Matt Pexa (Sr., C, New Prague, Minn.)

Lonnie Robinson (Sr., RHP, Osseo, Minn./Brooklyn Park)

Louie Salmen (Jr., 2B, St. Paul, Minn./Cretin-Derham Hall)

St. Thomas Season Preview

St. Thomas is ranked 13th in the national preseason poll released by d3baseball.com. Senior catcher Matt Pexa, who hit .421 over his last 34 games last season, made the d3baseball.com preseason All-America team. The Tommies return eight starting positions players and six of their top eight pitchers, and also will have at least three freshmen in the top 25.

Coach Dennis Denning starts his 14th season at St. Thomas with a Feb. 28 Metrodome doubleheader vs. St. Scholastica (36-8 last season). The Tommies play two other region powers in March twinbills in the Metrodome -- UW-Stevens Point on March 3, and UW-Oshkosh on March 25. Stevens Point took third in the nation last season (34-7). Oshkosh (35-12) and the Toms split two games in the regional playoffs.

UST will play five doubleheaders in Fort Myers, Fla., March 15-21, and also face the Minnesota Twins rookie team in a Thursday exhibition (1 p.m.). The Tommies will play nationally-ranked Trinity (Ct.) (30-8) to close the trip. St. Thomas will play an April non-conference doubleheader at Division II Southwest Minnesota State (26-16), and a late-season single game at St. Scholastica. The Toms start MIAC play March 29 at home vs. Bethel.

St. Thomas got hot at the right time in 2007 and achieved several notable accomplishments in another championship season:

Despite having only three seniors, the Tommies' 34-12 record gave the program a 30-win season for the 11th time in the last 12 years. --St. Thomas' 13-1 record from April 28-May 17 included a 4-1 record vs. nationally-ranked St. Olaf. That helped the Toms secure a share the conference title and become the first school ever to win five consecutive MIAC baseball crowns. UST's 16-4 conference record marked the 15th consecutive season in which Tommie baseball won 15 or more MIAC games. --The Toms won the conference playoff title for the sixth time in eight seasons, as they won three elimination games by a 39-14 margin. UST has now won either the conference regular-season or postseason baseball championship in each of the last 12 seasons. --St. Thomas is a combined 170-17 vs. conference foes in baseball and softball over the last four seasons -- 98-2 in softball, 72-15 in baseball. That includes a 22-2 postseason record. --St. Thomas made the NCAA regional playoffs for the 12th time in 13 seasons, and after a 2-0 start lost a pair of close games to finish third. The Toms' 6-3 postseason record moved 13-year head coach Dennis Denning's all-time postseason record to 55-30, including a 20-6 record in eight MIAC playoffs.

Leading the pitchers will be senior Lonnie Robinson (career 13-2), who has played on six MIAC title teams (basketball/baseball) thus far in six college seasons with the Tommies; senior Chris Bullis (Career: 29 app., 12-3, 3.44 ERA, 81 strikeouts, 26 walks); junior Dan Leslie (Career: 12-5, 2.28 ERA, 81 strikeouts, 27 walks, one HR surrendered in 123 innings); and junior Erik Olson (Career: 24 app., 8-3, 2.71 ERA, 3 saves, 109 IP, 81 strikeouts, 17 walks).

Pexa (2007: .359, 56 hits, 43 runs), Mark Boland (2007: .270, 37 hits), Robinson and Bullis (2007: .419, 62 hits, 31 RBI) lead a senior class that includes speedy utility player Reece Collins, infielder Bobby Gregoire (2007: .333, 14 hits) and OF Eric Fleming (2007: .341, 31 hits).

The junior class is led by Leslie (2007: .341, 45 hits), Olson, 2B Louie Salmen (2007: .370, 47 hits), utility player Brian Schmitz (2007: .299, 23 hits) and LHP Brady Gibbs (2007: 2.84 ERA, 2-0). Three sophomores who played extensively last season are 1B Tom Wippler (2007: .360, 41 hits, 27 RBI), OF Matt Olson (.297, 33 hits, 26 runs) and 3B Roy Larson (2007: .276, 14 hits).

Sophomore RHP Matt Schuld (1-0 in two appearances) is back after missing most of 2007 with a broken leg. Freshman OF-DH Taylor Rahm leads a group of seven freshmen on the 29-man varsity.