

# 2010 MIAC Baseball Season Preview

3/31/2010 10:46:41 AM

St. Paul, Minn. -- The snow is long gone, the grass is getting greener every day and birds chirping in the trees wake you every morning. It must be time for outdoor baseball in Minnesota.

Before the Minnesota Twins take the field for their home opener at their new outdoor ballpark, MIAC teams will open conference play with five double headers on Saturday, April 3.

St. Thomas, the reigning NCAA Division III champion, enters the 2010 season as the league favorite as picked by the coaches. Close behind the Tommies in the coaches' preseason poll is St. Olaf, Hamline, and Augsburg. The Oles and Auggies both picked up a first place vote.

The chase for a spot in the four-team, double elimination MIAC Playoffs will be competitive as ever as Macalester, Bethel, Gustavus, and Saint John's placed 5-8 in the poll, but all have teams that can challenge for a spot in the field. Look for Concordia, and Carleton, and Saint Mary's to feature young squads that could move up in the conference standings in 2010 as well.

The 20-game MIAC schedule concludes in early May with the top four teams qualifying for the MIAC Playoffs. The Playoffs will be held at Dundas and Northfield again this year and will run from Friday, May 14 to Sunday, May 16.

## 2010 MIAC Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (1 for first, 2 for second, etc.) Teams are ranked in order of lowest point total to highest with first place votes shown in parentheses.

- 1. St. Thomas (9)
- 2. St. Olaf (1)
- 3. Hamline
- 4. Augsburg (1)
- 5. Macalester
- 6. Bethel
- 7 (tie). Gustavus
- 7 (tie). Saint John's
- 9. Concordia
- 10. Carleton
- 11. Saint Mary's

**2010 MIAC Playoffs:** Friday-Sunday, May 14-16 at Dundas & Northfield (Top four teams - double elimination)

| [2010 MIAC Schedule](#) | [2009 MIAC Statistics](#) | [MIAC Recordbook](#) | [MIAC Archives](#) |

## Augsburg

**Coach:** Keith Bateman (7th season)  
**2009 Finish:** 5th (11-9 MIAC, 20-18 overall)

Augsburg Season Preview

During Keith Bateman's tenure as head coach of the Augsburg College baseball program, the Auggies have shown continual improvement. In each of Bateman's six seasons with the Auggies, Augsburg has recorded 16 or more wins, including last year's 20-18 overall record and 11-9 finish in Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference play.

With the bulk of the team's position players returning, along with some returning depth in the pitching staff, prospects are good for Augsburg to maintain its position in the upper half of the MIAC standings, with a goal of returning to the four-team conference postseason playoffs for the first time since 2005.

"We need to take care of what we can take care of, and each guy is responsible for what they need to accomplish," Bateman said. "We should be in the running this year in the conference. We have some unfinished things we need to take care of."

Six of the eight position-playing starters return to the Auggie lineup, including the entire infield starters. Key among them will be catcher Craig Henry (SR, Lino Lakes, Minn./Centennial HS), who returns for his fourth season as the Auggies' starting backstop.

Henry has earned All-MIAC honors each of his first three seasons -- one of just two incoming seniors in the MIAC to earn all-conference honors each of their three prior campaigns. A career .374 hitter, Henry hit .395 last season with a team-high 34 RBI and 18 extra-base hits. Defensively, he led the league by throwing out 18 players trying to steal bases in 47 attempts last year.

At first base, Joe Pierce (JR, Eden Prairie, Minn.) had a breakout season last year, earning All-MIAC honors with a team-best .410 batting average, to go along with a .607 slugging percentage, 18 extra-base hits and 33 RBI. Eric Olson (SR, New Prague, Minn.) will return for his third season as the Auggies' starting second baseman, after hitting .321 with seven doubles and 21 RBI last year. At shortstop, Donald Blunt (JR, Richfield, Minn.) has shown continual improvement throughout his career, hitting .364 last season with a team-best .653 slugging percentage and 19 extra-base hits, including a team-best five home runs, to earn All-MIAC honorable-mention honors. Bateman describes third baseman Mason Holmquist (JR, Prior Lake, Minn.) as the team's best defensive infielder, and his glove will be a key to his success in his second year as Augsburg's starter at the "hot corner." He hit .245 last year with 19 RBI and a .358 on-base percentage.

In the outfield, starting rightfielder Tim Gerding (SO, Robbinsdale, Minn./Cooper HS) returns. Starting 26 games in right field last year, he hit .250 with 10 stolen bases and 23 runs scored. Derek Williamson (JR, St. Francis, Minn.) will compete for time in the outfield after missing most of last season due to injury. Newcomer John Demgen (JR, Minneapolis, Minn./South HS) transfers to the Auggie program from Division I North Dakota State and should find plenty of playing time in the outfield.

One of the big question marks for the Auggies this season will be the depth of the team's pitching staff. Eight of the team's 14 players who pitched for the Auggies last season return to the lineup, but just four -- Kristofer Ozga (JR, Hawthorn Woods, Ill./Stevenson HS), Alex Glasenapp (SR, Minneapolis, Minn./South HS), Mark Heise (JR, Foley, Minn.) and Marshall Nelson (JR, Albertville, Minn./West Lutheran HS) -- pitched more than 10 innings on the varsity level.

"Those are the guys that will need to give us consistent efforts every time out to give us a chance to win," Bateman said.

Ozga had a strong season for the Auggies last year, with 54 strikeouts against 21 walks in 13 appearances, including a team-high nine starts and three complete games. His 3.44 earned-run average and .255 opponent batting average were best among the Auggie pitchers.

A veteran starter for the Auggies, Glasenapp finished with a career-best 4.64 ERA last year, with 29 strikeouts in 33.0 innings of work and a .270 opponent batting average. In his first season with the Auggies last year, Heise struck out 15 while walking nine in 19.2 innings, with a 2-0 record and 5.95 ERA. Nelson had 10 strikeouts in 10 innings of work last year.



**Bethel**

**Coach:** Greg Indlecoffer (7th season)

**2009 Finish:** Tied 6th (10-10 MIAC, 19-19 overall)

**Bethel Season Preview**

One of the most experienced teams in recent history is poised to take the field for Bethel in 2010 as nine seniors – all with significant playing time – return along with six juniors and nine sophomores. They will be joined by a number of freshmen eager to make an impact at the varsity level.

The Royals compiled an overall record of 19-19 in 2009, and a conference record of 10-10 which included shutout wins over each of the four MIAC playoff teams, including the eventual Division III national champions, St. Thomas, as well as tagging NCAA Division II Southwest Minnesota State University Mustangs with their first loss of the season when they matched up in Florida. Last season was marked by a number of individual achievements as Bethel landed three players on the All-Conference team, which was the most in team history.

Jay Slick (So., River Falls, Wis.) made an impact immediately in his first collegiate season by compiling a .436 batting average and leading the team in several offensive categories. Tim Oesterlin (Sr., Rochester, Minn.) finished among the top three batters in the MIAC and hit safely in all but four of the 37 games in which he played. Both Oesterlin and Slick earned a spot on one of the American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA)/Rawlings NCAA Division III All-Midwest Region teams, and have been cited as two of Collegiate Baseball newspaper's Division III Players to Watch for 2010.

The biggest task Bethel faces is replacing last season's MIAC Pitcher of the Year in Travis Adams.



### **Carleton**

**Coach:** Aaron Rushing (6th season)

**2009 Finish:** Tied 3rd (12-8 MIAC, 21-21 overall)

#### **Carleton Season Preview**

The 2009 baseball season was one of the best in the history of the Carleton program, as the Knights qualified for the MIAC tournament for the first time in school history. However, the 2010 version is looking to raise the bar even further. With seven positional starters, seven of the top nine pitchers, and 22 letter winners returning, including a pair of all-MIAC players and five players on the national preseason "players to watch" list, Carleton is poised to compete for the top of the MIAC once again.

The most decorated of the returners is senior outfielder Russ Fujisawa, an All-MIAC and All-Region honoree. The sparkplug at the top of the lineup, he had a breakout season in 2009, posting the highest recorded totals in Carleton history for hits, walks and doubles. Among the nation's best leadoff hitters, he led the team with a .413 batting average and finished second in the MIAC with a .540 on-base percentage.

The other returning all-conference selection, Alex Wirta, may move to third base this season. As a rookie he hit .397 in MIAC competition, and on the mound he served as the Knights' No. 2 pitcher, appearing in 17 games, winning four and recording a pair of saves.

Shortstop David Ames returns to anchor the infield after starting 71 games in his first two seasons and will be looked upon to provide the unit with leadership and his typically steady defense. He batted .386 in league play and looks to be a big part of the Knights' offense once again.

Catcher Grant Bowen hit .327 against MIAC opponents, and his work behind the dish helped cut opposing stolen bases nearly in half from the previous season. He adds power to the middle of the Knight's lineup and will split time at catcher and designated hitter this year.

Erik Fabry hit .328 in his rookie campaign and was the only Knight to start every game, finishing second on the squad in RBI and third in hits. His defense was impeccable and he paced the team with nine stolen bases.

Southpaw Aaron Troyanksy was the Knights workhorse on the mound. His 19 appearances is the highest recorded total in team annals, and he was second on the team in ERA to go along with his 6-2 record.

Michael Servis appeared in 12 games, going 3-1, and striking out a whopping 11.86 batters per nine innings. That number would have been good for 13th nationally, had he thrown enough innings to qualify.



## **Concordia**

**Coach:** Bucky Burgau (32nd season)

**2009 Finish:** 9th (8-12 MIAC, 15-18 overall)

### **Concordia Season Preview**

The 2010 Concordia baseball team will rely heavily on age and experience to try and earn a spot in the conference postseason for the first time in five years. The Cobbers have 11 seniors on the roster and head coach Bucky Burgau is about to enter an elite group of college coaches.

Burgau, who is entering his 32<sup>nd</sup> season at the helm of the Cobbers, is on the doorstep of 600 career wins in maroon and gold. He begins the season with 588 career wins and could become only the 20<sup>th</sup> active DIII coach to reach 600 wins and the 32<sup>nd</sup> in the history of DIII baseball. He also has 361 career MIAC wins which is the most in the history of the conference. Burgau will be counting on all his years of experience to help Concordia make a drive for the playoffs.

Concordia will have a veteran group of pitchers to help them reach their goals for the season as the team returns 11 of their top 15 pitchers from last season. The Cobbers also have a nucleus of starting pitchers that have grown up over the past three years and knows exactly what to expect from the teams during the highly competitive conference season. Concordia will be able to choose from six experienced starters this season. Eddie Massee (Sr., Appleton, Minn./Lac Qui Parle Valley HS), Chris Fellows (Sr., Ortonville, Minn.), Adam Johnson (Sr., Pelican Rapids, Minn.), Jake Torrison (Jr., Plymouth, Minn.), Andrew Skow-Anderson (Jr., Pelican Rapids, Minn.) and Zach Frappier (So., Fargo, N.D./Shanley HS) all had at least two starts last season and all have shown signs of being able to go deep into each game. Fellows led the team in ERA last season among the starters while Massee led the team in strikeouts and Torrison was second in wins.

The biggest question mark in the pitching staff will come at the end of games where the Cobbers have not had a legitimate closer since Josh Dietz in 2005. Last season five different pitchers had one save as Burgau searched for a late-inning closer. The leading candidate in 2010 will be Ryan Johnson (Sr., Fargo, N.D./Shanley HS) who has the make up to be a successful late inning closer because of his ability to induce strikeouts.

The biggest change for Concordia in 2010 will come on offense where the 1970's Earl Weaver Baltimore Orioles approach of three-run homers and winning by the long ball will give way to the 2000's "small ball" principles of the Minnesota Twins. The Cobbers lost 47.6% of their home run output and 38.9% of their RBI total from last year due to graduation. The two biggest losses came from last year's No.4 and 5 hitters in the line-up Kyle Johnson and Scott Schumacher. Johnson earned All-American honors last year and was named the MIAC MVP. He set school records in home runs and slugging percentage and led the MIAC in home runs, RBI, total bases and walks. Schumacher led the team in hitting and was in the top 10 in the MIAC in eight different statistical categories.

With the most of the power removed from the batting order, the Cobbers will have to rely on speed and scratching out runs one at a time. The top returning hitter from 2009 is junior outfielder Tony Emmerich (Moorhead, Minn.) who hit .409 last season. CC also returns four other hitters that finished the year with an average over .300. Adam Johnson hit .338 last season and banded out four home runs while Nick Lewis (Fergus Falls, Minn.) batted .329, Michael Carlson (Jr., Sartell, Minn.) was at .318 and Nate Haase (Sr., Bertha, Minn./Bertha-Hewitt HS) finished with a .302 mark. Carlson could be looking to have a breakout season as he possesses outstanding athletic ability and can drive the ball into the gaps and also use his speed to get on base. All five players should factor into the top of the CC line-up in 2010.

One of the big keys for the Concordia offense will be to find a consistent leadoff hitter. That role has been filled by senior Jake Krause (Moorhead, Minn.) for the better part of the past three seasons. Krause is a career .272 hitter and has led the team in stolen bases in each of his first three years. He will be the poster boy for the Cobber offense in 2010. If he can return to his sophomore season form where he hit .301 and had an on-base percentage of .396, then he should be able to set the table for Burgau to put pressure on the opposing team's defense by utilizing more sacrifices and stolen bases.



## **Gustavus**

**Coach:** Mike Carroll (14th season)

**2009 Finish:** 8th (9-11 MIAC, 17-21 overall)

### **Gustavus Season Preview**

The 2010 Gustavus Adolphus baseball team will look to improve on last season’s eighth place finish and move back into its traditional position among the upper echelon of the MIAC. Experience, solid fielding, and a strong work ethic will be the basis for success this season, as Gustavus returns nine seniors from last year’s squad. Gustavus finished last season with an overall record of 17-21 and a MIAC record of 9-11.

The middle-infield will be the biggest question mark entering the season, as the Gusties will need to replace two-time All-Conference shortstop Mike DesLauriers and second baseman Nate Ruff . Both DesLauriers and Ruff anchored the middle infield for the past four years. Head Coach Mike Carroll will have options to fill the middle-infield void, as senior Alan Woitas (Sleepy Eye, Minn.), junior Cody Sukalski (Blue Earth, Minn.), sophomore Taylor Fish (Brandon, S.D.), and junior Kyle Rains (Farmington, Minn.) will be contenders for the positions. Alan Woitas finished the season with a .367 batting average last year, as Sukalski hit .262, and Fish hit .246.

At the corners, four players will battle for starting role. That group includes senior Tory Herman (Shoreview, Minn.), freshman Drew Block (Rochester, Minn.), sophomore Erik Sveen (Excelsior, Minn.), and senior Chad Eul (Apple Valley, Minn.). Herman and Block will be the gloves at third base, while Sveen and Eul will contribute at first base. Both Herman (.310) and Eul (.315) hit over .300 last season, while Sveen batted .254. Block looked good in fall practice and will add depth at first. Behind the plate, senior Willy Hanson (St. Peter, Minn.) and junior Mitch Johnson (Hastings, Minn.) will garner the majority of playing time. Both Hanson and Johnson will be asked to play a larger role this season, as Hanson caught 11 games, starting four last season, while Johnson played in seven games.

In the outfield, senior Andrew Woitas (Sleepy Eye, Minn.), junior Brandon Boyd (Hastings, Minn.), and freshman Tim Miller (Eden Prairie, Minn.) are the leading candidates to garner the majority of playing time. Andrew Woitas hit .339 last season, as Boyd batted .213. Along with his role in the outfield, Miller will add depth to the Gustavus pitching staff.

Coach Carroll’s 2010 squad is filled with utility players that both pitch and play positions in the field. Alan Woitas, Herman, Sukalski, and Andrew Woitas are the top returning pitchers this season. All of them will play crucial roles in the field as well. Alan Woitas had the second lowest ERA on the team last season at 3.67, finishing with a 2-0 record. Herman had a 3.77 ERA (1-3), as Sukalski finished at 4.16 (3-2) and Andrew Woitas at 5.62 (2-1). Seniors Derek Eddie (Owatonna, Minn.), Ryan Michaelis (Big Lake, Minn.), Adam Bren (Chatfield, Minn.), and Kevin Hagen (Northfield, Minn.) will add depth to the Gustavus bullpen.

Gustavus will look to continue its strong defense this season after leading the league a year ago with a team fielding percentage of .973, however the Gusties will need to improve their pitching (seventh, 5.56 ERA) and hitting (tenth, .277 batting average) if they are to challenge for a playoff spot this year. Defending MIAC Champion St. Thomas will be the team to beat this season, yet Coach Carroll feels the race for the title will be close, with just a few wins and losses separating the teams in contention for playoff spots. If the Gusties can fill the holes in the middle infield, and get consistent pitching and hitting, it is likely that they will be among the top teams in the MIAC this season.



**Hamline**  
**Coach:** Jason Verdugo (9th season)  
**2009 Finish:** Tied 3rd (12-8 MIAC, 22-19 overall)

**Hamline Season Preview**

Hamline University head coach Jason Verdugo brings in one of the largest new classes in history of the program but sees strength in the youth of the team as the Pipers look to duplicate, and build upon, their 2009 success in which they reached the finals of the MIAC tournament.

The Pipers enter the year after the graduation of 2009 MLB draftee Dan Kaczrowski. The shortstop led the team last year with a .393 batting average and had 26 RBI while hitting ten doubles and a team-high four homeruns. After collecting numerous All-MIAC, All-Region, and All-American honors in his career, Kaczrowski was drafted by the Arizona Diamondbacks last summer.

First baseman/designated hitter Bill Sand represents the only other loss to graduation that the Pipers suffered this year. Sand hit .333 and knocked in 32 runs last year for Hamline.

The Pipers will see a lot of familiar faces in the field and at the plate, as Tres Humerickhouse (Jr., Farmington, Minn.), Andy King (So., Fort Myers, Fla.), J.D. Modrynski (Jr., Lakeville, Minn.), Tony Rogers (Jr., St. Michael, Minn.), Alex Buresh (Sr., Vadnais Heights, Minn.), and Cory Miller (So., Coon Rapids, Minn.) all return.

Modrynksi returns as the primary first baseman for the Pipers after hitting .303 in 2009 and tallying 22 RBI. He is joined by Humerickhouse, who may see time at third base or shortstop but will also rotating with Buresh at designated hitter.

Humerickhouse hit .319 last year with 25 RBI while Buresh, who is one of four outfielders that Verdugo will rotate, hit .349 in 16 games played.

Rounding out the talented corps of outfielders with Buresh are King, Rogers, and Miller. King led the trio with a .306 batting average last season and drove in 25 runs while Rogers' fleet footwork on the base paths put him at second on the team with 11 stolen bases.

The newest faces on the field will be seen on the left side of the infield as a pair of first-years from Burnsville, Minnesota in shortstop Jacob Dahl and third baseman Dan Ellefson take to the field. Verdugo expects the talented duo to see a lot of time in the line-up early in their career.

The biggest question for the Piper roster comes on the mound, as Verdugo's pitching corps features youth. First-years Casey Benford (Mesa, Ariz.) and Evan Knutson (Faribault, Minn.) head up the in-coming class of pitchers upon whom Verdugo will be relying for a high number of innings.

Brett Bugielski (So., River Falls, Wis.) and Kent Hulls (Jr., Apple Valley, Minn.) will lead the returning Piper starters on the mound this year. They combined for 29 appearances with 14 starts last year for the Pipers, posting a 9-5 record on the mound between the two of them.

Reliever Cass Kreitlow (Jr., Glenwood, Minn.) returns after posting a 4.15 ERA in an injury-shortened sophomore campaign. He looks to be a more valuable, and frequent, player out of the bullpen for the Pipers this year.

The steadiness in the battery for the Pipers will come from senior catcher Lincoln Hughes (Inver Grove Heights, Minn.), who sets up behind the plate for his final season after hitting .382 last year – second on the team. He drove in 24 runs and had an on-base percentage of .478 – tied with Kaczrowski for first on the team.

With a strong returning contingent and a very talented class of new-comers, the Hamline University baseball team will look to make a push for their third straight playoff berth and fourth in five seasons.



#### **Macalester**

**Coach:** Matt Parrington (11th season)

**2009 Finish:** Tied 6th (10-10 MIAC, 19-19 overall)

#### **Macalester Season Preview**

All but one letter-winner return from last year's team which finished 19-19 overall and 10-10 in the MIAC for a sixth-place finish, and Macalester is very optimistic for a successful season ahead, which gets underway Feb. 26 at the Metrodome. Macalester is led by a deep senior class and has one of the most experienced teams in the MIAC under 11<sup>th</sup> year head coach Matt Parrington.

Pitching ace James Murrey (Sr., Western Springs, Ill. / Lyons Township) enters his senior season as the program's most accomplished hurler in decades, and will once again be asked to carry a heavy burden on the mound. Last season's MIAC strikeout (42) and ERA (0.81) leader, Murrey goes into the campaign with a career 19-9 record. In 172 innings pitched, he's struck out 198 batters and posted a 2.35 ERA. Murrey picked up All-Midwest Region honors for the second time after ranking 10<sup>th</sup> in the NCAA Division III in strikeouts per nine innings and 14<sup>th</sup> in earned run average.

Macalester features a pair of four-year starters on the left side of the infield who have carried the offensive load since arriving as frosh: Shortstop Nate Wilson-Traisman (Sr., Eugene, Ore. / South Eugene) and third baseman Devin English (Sr., Annapolis, Md. / DeMatha). Wilson-Traisman – an All-Midwest Region pick – led Mac in batting (.425), RBI (44), slugging (.630), on-base average (.472), runs (30), doubles (15) and homers (3). He heads into final season with a .369 Macalester career batting average and 83 RBI in 108 games played. English bats leadoff for the Scots and is one of the MIAC's best defensive third basemen He hit .366 from the leadoff spot in '09 with a .520 slugging percentage and .466 on-base mark.

Outfielder / catcher Graham Brown (So., Annandale, Minn.) ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the MIAC in hitting at .429 and helped the Scots rank third in the league in stolen bases. Brown was a perfect 12-for-12 in steals and on the season ranked second to Wilson-Traisman on the team in batting (.405).

Brown was joined by catcher Robert Williams (So., West Covina, Calif. / Northview) and Mitch Glasser (So., Chicago, Ill. / The Latin School) as frosh with high batting averages last year. All were honorable mention All-MIAC picks. Williams hit .343 with a .500 slugging percentage, and second baseman / relief pitcher Glasser batted .341 with nine steals.



### **Saint John's**

**Coach:** Jerry Haugen (33rd season)

**2009 Finish:** 10th (7-13 MIAC, 12-20 overall)

#### **Saint John's Season Preview**

Optimism. That is what the 2010 Saint John's University baseball team is full of as it begins its season with nine returning starters and six freshmen that earned All-State or Lions All-Star honors last spring.

The Johnnies had a "rebuilding" year in 2009 as they replaced 12 graduated seniors with the help of six underclassmen, four of whom made their collegiate debuts. SJU finished 7-13 in the MIAC and 12-20 overall, including eight losses by three runs or less.

Head coach Jerry Haugen enters his 33<sup>rd</sup> season four wins shy of 600 with a 596-519-5 (.534) career record.

The Johnnies are also optimistic in regards to their 2010 schedule, as they are guaranteed to play 38 games this season (barring weather during their spring trip to Arizona); a far cry from the 65 games over the last two seasons.

The Johnnies return senior Andrew Gurbada (Royalton, Minn.), junior Aaron Traut (St. Cloud, Minn./Rocori) and sophomore Matt Boys (Eden Prairie, Minn./Minnetonka) to the outfield this season. Gurbada started 28 games for the Johnnies and ended the season with a .305 batting average with 21 RBI. Traut saw action in 22 games and posted a .258 batting average with eight RBI. Boys started 29 games for the Johnnies and finished the season with 15 RBI and an on-base percentage of .398. He also stole 10 bases and had a perfect fielding percentage.

Senior Nathaniel Jimenez (Trinidad, Colo./Holy Trinity) and sophomores Jimmy Loonan (Waseca, Minn.) and Luke Sweeter (Sartell, Minn./Sartell-St. Stephen) will add depth to the outfield in 2010. Jimenez batted .290 in eight starts, while Loonan played in 18 games for the Johnnies and finished with eight RBI, two home runs and a .472 slugging percentage last spring.



The Johnnies also add some more depth to the outfield with Lions All-Star Ian Goldsmith (Shoreview, Minn./Mounds View) and All-State selection Alex Powell (Hopkins, Minn.), both freshman.

The infielders will be led by junior shortstop Matt Butorac (Maple Grove, Minn.), who returns after leading the Johnnies in eight batting categories as a sophomore last spring. He finished with a .398 batting average (39-for-98), 28 RBI, 12 doubles, four home runs, 65 total bases and a .663 slugging percentage.

Junior first baseman Kyle Henkemeyer (Sauk Rapids, Minn./Sauk Rapids-Rice) returns at first base after starting all 30 games in 2009. He batted .326 with 11 RBI.

Senior second baseman Joe Eiden (Maple Grove, Minn./Totino-Grace) and sophomore third baseman Bert Marsnik (Annandale, Minn.) also return for SJU. Eiden batted .284 with 15 RBI and five stolen bases while playing second base in 2009, while Marsnik (Annandale, Minn.) finished second on the team with a .361 batting average and 15 RBI as a freshman.

Senior Mitch Faust (Plymouth, Minn./Wayzata) and juniors Andrew Hengel (Bemidji, Minn.), Jack Ries (Shoreview, Minn./Totino-Grace) and Eric Smith (Rogers, Minn.) will provide depth throughout the infield.

Freshman Max Forster (Hopkins, Minn.), a 2009 Lions All-Star, will also be in the mix at shortstop, giving Haugen options at third base and DH with Butorac and Marsnik.

As a whole, the Johnnies will need to improve their overall fielding percentage from last season. The .934 mark was the lowest in recent memory and the .941 percentage in MIAC play was the lowest since 2001 (.939).

Junior Brian Skluzacek (Cold Spring, Minn./Rocori) returns behind the plate after batting .258 with four doubles, one triple and two home runs in 31 games last spring. He also led SJU with a .425 on-base percentage and threw out 14 potential base stealers (62.1 percent, 23-37).

Sophomore Ben Kelsey (Savage, Minn./Holy Angels) and All-State freshman Mitch Oakes (Minnetonka, Minn.) will provide depth for the Johnnies at catcher. Kelsey batted .667 in three appearances last season.

Seniors Andrew Aebly (Madison, Wis./Edgewood) and Matt Johnson (Eagan, Minn.), as well as junior Brett Kramer (Baxter, Minn./Brainerd) return to the starting rotation this season. Aebly led the staff with a 2.77 ERA in 39 innings of work (2-0 record), while Johnson pitched 48 innings for the Johnnies and finished with a 7.31 ERA and 21 strikeouts (2-3 record). Kramer, meanwhile, led the Johnnies with 26 strikeouts in 43.1 innings of work (2-6 record) as a sophomore.

Senior spot-starter Aaron Hellem (Lincoln, Neb./Pius X), who recorded one win in three starts, will also see time on the mound for SJU.

Junior southpaw Dan Beste (Freeport, Minn./Melrose Area) and sophomore Hayden Zimmerman (New Richmond, Wis.) return in the bullpen after making six and three appearances, respectively, in 2009. Junior Kyle Green (Shakopee, Minn.) will also be in contention for innings, specifically in the later innings, after serving as the closer on the 2009 Minnesota State Amateur Class B state-champion Shakopee squad.

Freshmen Lions All-Stars Connor Cline (Bloomington, Minn./Jefferson) and Adam Wenker (Sartell, Minn./Sartell-St. Stephen), as well as *St. Cloud Times* All-Area selection Ryan Spengler (St. Cloud, Minn./Tech), will also be in contention for innings this spring.



#### **Saint Mary's**

**Coach:** Nick Winecke (2nd season)

**2009 Finish:** 11th (2-18 MIAC, 8-28 overall)



## Saint Mary's Season Preview

One percent.

It may not seem like much, but for Saint Mary's University baseball coach Nick Winecke, one percent could very well be the difference between a run-of-the-mill 2010 season and a run for a conference playoff berth.

"Our motto this season is, 'One Percent Better,' " explained Winecke, whose team kicks off the 2010 campaign on March 10 with a nonconference doubleheader against Mayville State at the HHH Metrodome. "We are striving to improve by one percent every day.

"That may not seem like much, but when you've got 32 guys improving one percent, in reality, we're improving 32 percent each day."

And Saint Mary's head coach is eager for his Cardinals to improve on a year ago, when SMU went 8-28 in Winecke's first year at the helm.

"Last year was a learning experience for everyone," said Winecke, whose team capped off its 2009 season with a come-from-behind 5-4 win over nationally ranked St. Thomas in its season finale. "I learned so much about what it takes to be a collegiate head coach, and everyone in the program learned what my expectations are of them."

With a solid nucleus returning — spearheaded by starting shortstop Kyle Ryan (St. Paul, Minn.) and reigning All-Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference selection Zach Olberding (Maplewood, Minn.) — those expectations have been ramped up a bit.

"When you look at our roster, we're actually an 'old' team," said Winecke, who boasts nine seniors on his 32-man roster. "We return a lot of guys who saw a lot of playing time last year and, hopefully, that experience will pay big dividends this season."

Last year was certainly a positive experience for Olberding, who closed out his sophomore season with a team-leading .394 batting average (39-for-99). He also scored 13 runs and led the team in home runs (3) and RBIs (19). Olberding also shared the team lead with 12 multiple-hit games and five multiple-RBI games.

Ryan, meanwhile, made the move from second base to shortstop a seamless one in 2009, committing just six errors on a team-leading 109 attempts, while also hitting .336 and leading the squad in at-bats (122), runs (19), hits (41) and stolen bases (14).

And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

SMU returns six of its top seven hitters, while also boasting eight pitchers who threw at least 13 innings a year ago.

"We've got a lot of guys with experience on the mound in (college) game situations," said Winecke. "And so far (this season) I really like what I've seen out of the guys."

One key for the Cardinals this year will be finishing what they start. SMU heading into the seventh inning with the lead nine times last season — but won just five of those contests.

"We were in a lot of games last year where we went into the final innings with the lead, but came out on the short end," Winecke said. "Hopefully those games were learning experiences for us — not to mention a thing of the past.

"I'm excited about the potential of this team," added Winecke. "If there's one thing I can guarantee, it's that we are going to be an extremely hard-working team and we are going to make sure to get better every single day."

One percent at a time.



### **St. Olaf**

**Coach:** Matt McDonald (16th season)

**2009 Finish:** 2nd (14-6 MIAC, 32-14 overall)

## St. Olaf Season Preview

The 2010 St. Olaf College Baseball team is returning after a season in which it won the 2009 MIAC playoffs championship after a runner up finish in the regular season. The Oles finished 15th in the final national poll after advancing to the NCAA Midwest Region finale.

With the departure of 11 seniors from the 2009 squad, the Oles will look to several returners and newcomers in 2010.

The strength of the 2010 Oles could be their pitching staff. Several returners and key newcomers yield many options for McDonald.

Juniors Brandon Agneberg (7-4, 3.18 ERA, 10 starts) and Erik Olson (7-1, 3.74 ERA, 16 appearances) are expected to lead the staff by example. Agneberg worked mostly as a starter and was second on the team in innings (65.0) and tossed three complete games. Olson was used mostly in a relief roll, as he made 15 appearances out of the bullpen.

Sophomore Ben Hughes posted a 3-0 mark in 47-plus innings last season and will be asked to carry more of the load in 2010. Hughes had a 5.10 ERA but allowed only 19 walks against 45 strikeouts in 11 appearances.

First years Anders Dzurak and Jake Schmiesing will also get the ball early and often. Junior Wes Olson, who went 1-0 with a 2.87 ERA in 12 appearances last year (15.2 innings), will add depth to the staff.

Senior Carson Jones will lead the outfielders with both his glove and his bat. He has played in all but two games since arriving at St. Olaf and started in all 46 games last spring. He hit .378 with four homers, 32 RBIs, 16 doubles and five triples last season. Jones also went 25-for-25 in stolen base attempts.

Sophomore Luke Peterson will return after .310 in 10 starts. Peterson, junior Mark Lee, sophomore Jim Blissenbach, and sophomore Andy Bartz will challenge for spots in the outfield.

The St. Olaf infield will lean on newcomers and a number of returners, including 2009 MIAC Rookie of the Year Erik Nelson, to fill the infield spots this spring.

Nelson, who played first base for most of 2009, could play at first or third base this season. Nelson hit .404 in 33 games with six homers, eight doubles, two triples, and 30 RBIs.

Erik Klefsaas and Sean DuBe could also see time at shortstop, or third base. Klefsaas hit .354?(48 AB) in 23 games last year while Dube hit .295 (60 AB) in 30 appearances.

It appears that first year Brady Sand, an all-region and all-conference honoree at Eau Claire Memorial, will hold the shortstop spot to start the season.

At first base Sam Baltes and Matt Kieffer could split time early. Baltes has spent time most of his time in the outfield over the last three seasons.

Senior captain Tyler Jones will start as catcher for the Oles and potentially share time with Nelson and Dan Lee. Jones, a two-year starter in the outfield, hit .363 in 41 games last year with 41 RBIs.

He also added four homeruns, nine doubles and two triples.

Head coach Matt McDonald (406-189, 223-77 MIAC) has led his teams to a combined seven MIAC titles in his 15 seasons -- four regular season and three playoffs. Last season's trip to the NCAA was the fifth while the 30-win season was the fourth under McDonald. Last spring, he passed 400 career wins.



**Coach:** Chris Olean (1st season)

**2009 Finish:** 1st (15-5 MIAC, 41-13 overall)

## St. Thomas Season Preview

UST's Interim Head Coach Chris Olean will look to keep the Tommie baseball train rolling in 2010.

Olean, a long-time assistant with the Tommies, took over for 15-year head coach Dennis Denning, who retired from the university on Feb. 1. A two-time National Coach of the Year, Denning compiled a 522-157 record at St. Thomas. His Tommie teams qualified for the NCAA playoffs 14 of his 15 seasons, with four top-two national finishes.

A former St. Thomas All-American pitcher, Olean has been Tommie pitching coach the last nine seasons. He contributed to NCAA championship seasons in 2001 and 2009 and UST's current string of seven consecutive conference titles.

Olean has borrowed a page from his mentor as he prepares for his 2010 debut. He's more focused on the process and day-to-day improvement than in setting or meeting lofty team goals.

"I just want the guys to play to their ability and play like they're capable of," Olean said. "I know they're ready to go and are ready to get the games started. They realize they're wearing a big target."

The Tommies return 19 of their top 25 varsity players from an NCAA champion squad. They were ranked first nationally in the Division III preseason poll after posting a 41-13 mark last season.

Top returners include:

--Senior pitcher Matt Schuld (12-1, 3.70 ERA in 2009, 19 career wins) earned All-America and Academic All-America honors last season.

--Senior OF Matt Olson (23 runs, 14 RBI, 29 hits in 20 May games) was named the Most Outstanding Player at the College World Series.

--Junior OF Matt McQuillan (.377 BA, 66 hits, 45 runs, 16 SBs, one error) is a defensive and base-stealing threat.

--Senior SS Roy Larson (.357 BA, 95 total bases, 45 RBI, 66 hits, 40 runs, 17 walks) was among the team's most improved players.

--Senior 1B Tom Wippler (51 hits, 32 RBI, 13 doubles) is one of the nation's best defensive players with just five errors in 1,094 chances.

--Senior Brandon Stone (3-2, 2.39 ERA) won the NCAA championship game with seven innings of two-hit, shutout relief and had the save against the Minnesota Gophers.

--Sophomores Bryce Gapinski (7-2, 3.34 ERA) and John Licht (6-2, 3.36 ERA, two NCAA playoff complete-game wins) were two of the nation's best freshmen pitchers.

--Junior catcher Brady Field (.359 BA, 17 RBI, 28 hits) will be an important piece on defense.

--Junior OF-DH Taylor Rahm (65 hits, .346 BA in 66 career games) has some pop in his bat.

UST recorded a 2.12 ERA in 12 NCAA playoff games to help it post a 6-0 record in elimination games at regionals and nationals.

Under Olean, St. Thomas pitchers have led the conference in ERA in eight of the last nine seasons, and the Toms have won either the regular-season or playoff championship each year.

St. Thomas has led the nation in fielding percentage in each of the last two seasons.

Varsity newcomers in 2010 include Tommie hockey standout Andrew Kappers, who played on a state championship team five years ago at Lakeville North; and freshmen RHPs Mark Dominik of Hill-Murray and Nick Gervais of Totino-Grace.

UST graduated seniors Dan Leslie, Louie Salmen, Erik Olson, Brian Schmitz and Brady Gibbs. Catcher Ben Wartman, an Academic All-American and football All-American, has decided not to play this season.