

2017 MIAC Baseball Preview and Preseason Coaches' Poll

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2017 MIAC Baseball Season Preview

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – Though it's not even the end of February, baseball is definitely in the Minnesota air. Recently, multiple teams from the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) actually played outdoors thanks to unseasonably warm temperatures to signal the start of another promising season in the MIAC.

A year ago, the 2016 MIAC standings featured incredible parity at the top, as the top four teams were all separated by just one game and all four had a chance to earn the MIAC title over the season's final conference series. In the end, the University of St. Thomas held off the other three challengers to win the championship by a single game with a 14-6 MIAC record and a 25-15 overall mark. The title was the 13th in 14 season for Head Coach Chris Olean's program dating back to 2003. The Tommies now have 35 overall MIAC baseball championships, nearly double the next-best total.

One of those other contenders saved their late-season magic for the postseason, as Saint John's went 3-0 to win its second MIAC Playoff title in as many years – this time on its new home field, no less – and then the Johnnies went 4-2 at the NCAA Midwest Regional to continue its tremendous run. Saint John's finished 32-14 overall and was part of a three-way tie for second in the MIAC standings at 13-7 and returns with high hopes for more success in Head Coach Jerry Haugen's milestone 40th season.

Hamline and Saint Mary's also had outstanding seasons, sharing second place with the Johnnies with 13-7 conference records, and they also joined the Playoff fun and advanced deep in the tournament. The Pipers finished 28-15 overall and Saint Mary's was 27-15-1 to give the MIAC an extremely formidable top four in 2016.

Concordia just missed out on a Playoff spot a year ago, as the Cobbers were over .500 in the conference at 11-9 and finished with a solid 21-18 overall record. Both Augsburg and Bethel also went .500 overall with identical 19-19 records, and that pair also shared sixth place in the conference standings with 9-11 MIAC records. Gustavus also tied those two for sixth with a 9-11 conference mark and finished with a winning record overall with a 20-18 mark. Carleton (12-28, 8-12 MIAC), Macalester (17-18, 6-14 MIAC) and St. Olaf (11-26, 5-15 MIAC) rounded out the 2016 standings.

The 2017 is already under way, and really gets going in the coming week thanks to the addition of U.S. Bank Stadium. The new home of the Minnesota Vikings is all set to host indoor baseball in the NFL's off-season, and 10 of 11 MIAC teams have games scheduled there in February and March.

Even with the possibility of February's outdoor baseball going away in a hurry thanks to an impending storm, the 2017 season has arrived and if it's anything like the 2016 campaign, the action on the diamond is going to be a season-long, drama-filled celebration of MIAC baseball.

COACHES CAST THEIR VOTES

After winning the 2016 title and adding to its impressive run of MIAC success, big things are anticipated for St. Thomas once again in 2017, as the Tommies finished atop the 2017 MIAC Baseball Preseason Coaches' Poll. Olean's club received eight first-place votes and 98 points to earn the status as favorite heading into the season. The team graduated star pitcher Eric Veglahn, who is already starting a promising professional career, but is excited about its offensive prospects in 2017 with the return of junior Jake Smith (OF), Hunter Hart (1B) and Zach Gottfredaen (2B), who all hit better than .290 with more than 30 RBI a year ago.

It's no surprise to see Saint John's second in the coaches' poll with the other three first-place votes and 91 points after last season's success. The Johnnies bring back an outstanding pitching staff, led by ace Alex Kendall and valuable reliever Nick Noack, and senior third baseman Derek Schiebel returns after joining Kendall on the All-MIAC and All-Region teams in 2016.

Hamline and Saint Mary's were separated by just four points in the coaches' poll, as the Pipers were picked third with 75 points and the Cardinals were a close fourth with 71 points, with both expected to return to the four-team Playoffs. Hamline's offense will again be led by slugging 1B Jacob Picht and standout pitchers Alex Bauermeister and Nolan Schoonveld both return to give the Pipers talent on the hill. All-



American 3B Ben Buerkle is back for Saint Mary's to write the final chapter of his standout career, and senior OF Bob Kinne and pitcher Nathan Mathwig certainly bolster the Cardinal's hopes to challenge for the MIAC title and another trip to the postseason.

Concordia and Bethel were just outside the Playoff picture a year ago, and coaches expect them to be both closely-matched and in contention again this season, as the Cobbers (62 points) edged the Royals (61 points) for fifth in the poll. Concordia has closer Joe Hallock, home-run leader Chad Johnson and infielder Turner Storm back, who led the team in hitting a year ago. Bethel brings back plenty of talent, just a year removed from the program's first MIAC title. Bryce Marquardt is back after breaking the single-season hits record and he'll be joined by Bret Neuville and Lars Anderson.

Just eight points separated the trio of Augsburg (43 points), Gustavus (39 points) and St. Olaf (35 points) as they each hope to improve and make a Playoff push in 2017. Augsburg's hopes starts with the return of MIAC & Midwest Region Rookie-of-the-Year Mike Brookshaw, who hit .415 as a rookie, and seniors Josh Marlowe and Rhett Hebig also bolster the Auggie lineup. Gustavus has a lot of talent back in the infield thanks to the return of Isaiah Welckle and Brock Peterson, and Josh Chatfield returns in the outfield with the team's top batting average. St. Olaf's young nucleus – led by P/IF Jake Mathison, and outfielders Joe Keiski and Sam Stuckmayer – looks to come of age as Head Coach Matt McDonald's club looks to make a big jump in 2017.

Macalester (17 points) and Carleton (13 points) rounded out the final two spots in the 2017 coaches' poll, but both have reason to be optimistic as they open the season. The Scots have two All-MIAC players back in infielder Quentin Stuart and outfielder Nick McMullen, and infielder Ben Castagnetti joined McMullen on the All-Region team. Carleton graduated star player Hayden Tsutsui but brings back All-MIAC outfielder Griffin Bolte and has high hopes for the return of infielder Willie Freimuth and pitcher/infielder Austin Heuer.

A CLOSER LOOK

The rest of the 2017 MIAC Baseball Preview contains complete results from the 2017 Preseason Coaches' Poll, MIAC Playoff details, helpful links and a preview for each team submitted by their sports information director. The MIAC web site - www.miacathletics.com - will be an outstanding source for MIAC baseball news, schedules, scores, stats and more throughout the 2017 season.

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

2017 MIAC Baseball Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (10 for first, nine for second, etc.) Teams are ranked in order of highest point total to lowest with vote totals listed and first-place votes shown in parentheses.

2017 MIAC Baseball Preseason Coaches' Poll		
Rank	Institution	Total
1.	St. Thomas (8)	98
2.	Saint John's (3)	91
3.	Hamline	75
4.	Saint Mary's	71
5.	Concordia	62
6.	Bethel	61
7.	Augsburg	43
8.	Gustavus	39
9.	St. Olaf	35
10.	Macalester	17
11.	Carleton	13

2017 MIAC Baseball Playoffs

The MIAC Baseball Playoffs return to Saint John's Field in Collegeville, Minn., in 2017, with Saint John's University serving as host. The four-team, double-elimination tournament will be held Thursday, Friday and Saturday, May 11-13, 2017. There will be two fields in use for the first two rounds, with games played simultaneously. The other site will be Cold Spring Baseball Park in Cold Spring, Minn. There will be one game at each site Thursday at 7 p.m. and again Friday at 3 p.m. From there, all the action will move to SJU, with a 7 p.m. semifinal Friday and Saturday's championship series starting at 12 p.m. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2017 NCAA Division III Baseball Tournament.

| [2017 MIAC Baseball Playoff Home Page](#) |

MIAC Baseball Links

| [Website](#) | [Standings](#) | [Schedule](#) | [Statistics](#) | [News](#) | [Athletes-of-the-Week](#) | [Recordbook](#) | [Archives](#) |

Team-by-Team Previews

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



AUGSBURG | [Auggies' baseball home page](#) |

Head Coach

- Keith Bateman (13th season)

A Year Ago

- 9-11 MIAC (t-6th place) | 19-19 Overall

Players to Watch

- Mike Brookshaw (INF, SO | 2016 MIAC and D3baseball.com Midwest Region Rookie of the Year, All-MIAC, D3baseball.com and ABCA/Rawlings All-Midwest Region 1st Team; Hit .415 with 32 runs scored, 8 2B, 7 3B, 5 HR, 35 RBI, .715 slugging pct. and .450 on-base pct.; Part of turning 16 double plays on defense.)
- Josh Marlowe (INF, SR | Hit .368 with 35 runs scored, 11 2B, 5 3B, 3 HR, 40 RBI, .608 slugging pct. and .454 on-base pct. in 2016; .362 career batting average.)
- Rhett Hebig (C, SR | 4-year starting catcher; Hit .349 with 32 runs, 6 2B, 1 3B, 22 RBI, .422 slugging pct. and .425 on-base pct. in 2016, threw out 6 runners trying to steal; Career .317 batting average with 61 runs, 15 2B, 1 3B, 1 HR, .375 slugging pct. and .392 on-base pct.)

Did You Know?

- Second baseman Mike Brookshaw earned a spot on both the D3baseball.com and ABCA/Rawlings Division III All-Midwest Region first teams in 2016. He was the lone first-year player on both the 15-man ABCA/Rawlings All-Region first team and the 14-man D3baseball.com first team. He was named Midwest Region Rookie of the Year by D3baseball.com.
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BETHEL | [Royals' baseball home page](#) |

Head coach

- Brian Raabe (6th season)

A Year Ago

- 9-11 MIAC (T-6th place) | 19-19 Overall

Players to Watch

- Bryce Marquardt
- Bret Neuville
- Lars Anderson

Did You Know?

- Bryce Marquardt broke Bethel's all-time record for single-season hits during the 2016 season. Marquardt posted 63 hits, which topped Matt Rowley's record of 61 back in 2012. Prior to Rowley was current Augsburg head coach Keith Bateman, who mustered 60 hits in 1998.
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CARLETON | [Knights' baseball home page](#) |

Head coach

- Aaron Rushing (12th season)

A Year Ago

- 8-12 MIAC (9th place) | 12-28 Overall

Players to Watch

- Griffin Bolte (OF, Jr. | All-MIAC selection last season; finished the regular season second among MIAC outfielders and fourth among all players with a .430 batting average in conference games; ranked 13th with a .464 on-base percentage and 11th with a .620 slugging in MIAC contests; was one of only six sophomores on the All-MIAC roster.)
- Willie Freimuth (IF, Sr. | Missed first five games last season while on off-campus study program, then started final 35 games and finished the season with a .321 batting average, 398 on-base percentage, and .500 slugging percentage against MIAC opponents.)
- Austin Heuer (RHP/IF, So. | Tied for third on the team with 2 home runs last year and was fifth with 15 RBI; went 3-3 on the mound in 2016 as he made 14 appearances and 8 starts, ranking third on the squad.)

Did You Know?

- The Carleton College baseball team earned the America Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA) inaugural Team Academic Excellence Award.

The Knights were one of only 36 NCAA Division III programs to take home this accolade and are one of two teams from the MIAC to receive the honor.



CONCORDIA | [Cobbers' baseball home page](#) |

Head coach

- Chris Coste (3rd season)

A Year Ago

- 11-9 MIAC (5th place) | 21-9 Overall

Players to Watch

- Joe Hallock (RHP, Sr. | Led the team in saves in 2016; only gave up four extra base hits in 73 plate appearances)
- Chad Johnson (OF, Jr. | Tied for the team lead in home runs in 2016; led the team in stolen bases)
- Turner Storm (IF, Jr. | Led the team in batting average in 2016; was second on the team in slugging pct. & on-base pct.)

Did You Know?

- Senior pitcher Joe Hallock suffered a stroke as a freshman at Concordia.



GUSTAVUS | [Gusties' baseball home page](#) |

Head coach

- Brad Baker (3rd season)

A Year Ago

- 9-11 MIAC (T-Sixth place) | 20-18 Overall

Players to Watch

- Isaiah Welckle (IF, Sr. | 2016 All-Conference....365 batting average...8 2Bs...16 RBI....413 on-base...8-13 SB/ATT)
- Brock Peterson (IF, Jr. | 2016 All-Defensive Team....950 fielding percentage....287 batting average...11 RBI)
- Josh Chatfield (OF, Sr. | team-high .389 batting average...12 2B...26 RBI....534 slugging percentage)

Did You Know?

- Gustavus is beginning a complete renovation of the baseball facility. The \$1.5 million project, which is completely donor funded, will begin immediately following the 2017 baseball season. The renovation will be completed in two phases beginning with the installation of SPRINTURF Ultrablade DFE 42 on the entire field. Phase two, which is contingent on fundraising, includes a covered grandstand, press box, new scoreboard, dugouts, bullpens, and an elevated berm down the first base line for spectator viewing.



HAMLIN | [Pipers' baseball home page](#) |

Head coach

- Jim Weyandt (5th season)

A Year Ago

- 13-7 MIAC (T-2nd) | 28-15 Overall

Players to Watch

- Jacob Picht (1B, Sr., hit .428 last year and did not make an error in MIAC play. All-MIAC, All-MIAC Defensive, All-Region team)
- Alex Bauermeister (Jr., RHP, 4-2, 2.96 ERA, 62K in 54.2 IP, All-MIAC, All-Region team)
- Nolan Schoonveld (So., RHP-IF, 5-1 in 12 starts, 49.1 IP second most on team)

Did You Know?

- The 28 wins last season is the second most in school history. The school record of 29 was set in 2011.



MACALESTER | [Scots' baseball home page](#) |

Head coach

- Matt Parrington (18th season)

A Year Ago

- 6-14 MIAC (10th place) | 17-18 Overall

Players to Watch

- Quentin Stuart (INF, SR | All-MIAC in 2016; .330 BA, 35 H, 24 RBI, 6 HR, 12 2B)
- Nick McMullen (OF, JR | All-Region, All-MIAC in 2016; .368 BA, 49 H, 25 R, 32 RBI, 5 HR)
- Ben Castagnetti (INF, JR | All-Region in 2016; .415 BA, 49 H, 5 2B, 19 RBI)

Did You Know?

- The Scots return six players who hit at least .330 last season, and five with 19 or more RBIs in 2016.

SAINT JOHN'S | [Johnnies' baseball home page](#) |



Head coach

- Jerry Haugen (40th season)

A Year Ago

- 13-7 MIAC (T-Second place) | 32-14 Overall

In the 2016 Postseason

- MIAC Tournament (Champions) – defeated Hamline (6-5), defeated Saint Mary's (4-2 and 11-4)
- NCAA's La Crosse Regional (Second Place) – defeated St. Scholastica (7-2); lost to UW-La Crosse (0-10); defeated North Central, Ill. (8-2); defeated Luther, Iowa (5-4, 10 inn.); defeated Concordia-Chicago (7-5, 11 inn.); and lost to UW-La Crosse (3-5).

Players to Watch

- Alex Kendall (RHP, Sr. | Earned All-MIAC and All-Midwest Region recognition in 2016...led all SJU starting pitchers with an 8-2 record, 2.69 ERA and 57 strikeouts in 80.1 innings...the 80.1 innings set a new SJU single-season record...he allowed only two total earned runs (eight unearned) in the two losses...MIAC All-Defensive Team honoree was the first Johnnie to be named to the ABCA/Rawlings NCAA Division III Gold Glove team last spring)
- Nick Noack (RHP, Jr. | Led SJU in pitching appearances (17) and saves (5) in 2016...posted an 8-1 record, 1.91 ERA and .244 opponent batting average in 44.2 innings)
- Derek Schiebel (3B, Sr. | Earned All-MIAC and All-Midwest Region recognition for the second straight season in 2016...set SJU single-season records for at-bats (193) and triples (7) last spring...finished second on the team in hits (68), extra-base hits (16) and RBI (39)...enters his senior season ninth in school history with 132 career hits, 54 behind the record, and second in school history with nine career triples, two behind the record)

Did You Know?

- Saint John's University changed the name of Becker Park, its home baseball stadium, to "Haugen Field at Becker Park" to honor head coach Jerry Haugen. The 2017 season is the milestone 40th for Haugen, who is the longest-tenured baseball coach in the MIAC. The Johnnies set a school record for wins with a 32-14 record (13-7 MIAC), including a 4-2 mark to finish runner-up at the NCAA Midwest Regional in La Crosse, Wis. SJU hosted the 2016 MIAC Tournament and posted a 3-0 record to earn its second consecutive MIAC Playoff Championship, and third in the last five seasons.

SAINT MARY'S | [Cardinals' baseball home page](#) |



Head coach

- Nick Winecke (9th season)

A Year Ago

- 13-7 MIAC (2nd place) | 27-15-1 Overall

In The 2016 Postseason

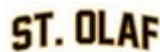
- MIAC Tournament: St. Thomas (W, 7-0), Saint John's (L, 4-2), Hamline (W, 19-2), Saint John's (L, 11-4)

Players to Watch

- Ben Buerkle (Senior, 3B, Roseville, Minn. | 43 GP, .386 BA, 153 AB, 45 R, 59 H, 14 2B, 6 3B, 3 HR, 43 RBI, 94 TB, .614 SLG %, 33 BB, 10 SB. ... First-Team All-MIAC in 2015 & 2016 ... 2015 ABCA/Rawlings and D3baseball.com All-American and All-Region ... 2015 & 2016 Capital One Academic All-American ... 2014 MIAC Rookie of the Year)
- Bob Kinne (Senior, OF, St. Paul, Minn. | 43 GP, 158 AB, 40 R, 61 H, 14 2B, 5 3B, 8 HR, 50 RBI, 109 TB, .690 SLG %, 18 BB, 9 SB, .990 FLG % ... 2016 First-Team All-MIAC, MIAC All-Defensive Team, ABCA All-Midwest Region Third-Team, D3baseball.com All-Midwest Region Second Team)
- Nathan Mathwig (Junior, P, Woodbury, Minn. | 5-1, 2.01 ERA, 19 APP, 31.1 IP, 7 ER, 24 Ks ... 2016 First-Team All-MIAC, First-Team D3baseball.com All-Midwest Region, Third-Team ABCA All-Midwest Region)

Did You Know?

- Saint Mary's scored 10 runs without making an out in a 10-run eighth inning in its 19-2 MIAC Playoff elimination game against Hamline on May 13. The Cardinals' 10-run eighth vs. Hamline marked the second straight year the Cardinals have scored 10 runs in an inning against the Pipers—having also achieved the feat in a 20-2 win on April 1, 2015.



ST. OLAF | [Oles' baseball page](#) |



Head coach

- Matt McDonald (23rd season)

A Year Ago

- 5-15 MIAC (11th place) | 11-26 Overall

Players to Watch

- Jake Mathison (P/IF, Jr. | 68 career innings on mound... Was 1-1 in three appearances with 3.07 ERA in 2016... Was 13-for-25 before season-ending injury in 2016.)
 - Joe Keiski (OF, So. | Led team with .388 average in 2016... 10 2B, 26 RBI, 15BB vs. 15K in 120 AB.)
 - Sam Stuckmayer (OF, So. | Led team in HR (7), RBI (38) and slugging pct. .(629))
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ST. THOMAS | [Tommies' baseball home page](#) |

Head coach

- Chris Olean (8th season)

A Year Ago

- 14-6 MIAC (1st place) | 25-15 Overall

In the 2016 Postseason

- Went 0-2 in MIAC Playoffs

Players to Watch

- Jake Smith (OF, Jr., ; Career: 76 Gm., 92 hits, 48 RBI, 67 runs, 12 doubles, five triples, four HRs, 29 walks, .342)
- Hunter Hart (1B, Jr.; Career: 34 Gm., 31 hits, 31 RBI, five doubles, four HRs, 21 runs, 17 walks, .310 BA)
- Zach Gottfredsen (2B, Jr.; Career: 79 Gm., 40 RBI, 45 runs, 84 hits, 13 doubles, 7 HRs, .292 BA)

Did You Know?

- Juniors Ryan Zimmerman and Drew Molin, who pitched last summer in the Northwoods League, are joined atop the pitching staff by seniors Caleb Fernholz and Mitch Larson, plus South Dakota State transfer Henry DeCoster.
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[MIAC Baseball Home Page](#)