

# 2020 MIAC Baseball Preview

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**BLOOMINGTON, Minn.** – College baseball is back at U.S. Bank Stadium this weekend and Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) teams are ready to begin the 2020 campaign. Prior to first pitch, however, MIAC coaches cast their ballots in the annual Preseason Coaches' Poll. The league appears to be up for grabs again this season, with four different squads receiving first-place votes.

Saint John's received the highest number of first-place votes with five. The defending MIAC Playoff champs lead the way in the preseason balloting with 95 points. The Johnnies have reached the postseason 10 straight years, locking up an automatic berth to the NCAA Tournament four times in that span. SJU senior pitcher and designated hitter **Joey Stock** received honorable mention status as a Preseason All-American by

D3baseball.com in January after leading the MIAC in slugging percentage and home runs last season. Stock broke the Johnnies' 19-year-old single-season home run record with 12 last spring and was intentionally walked eight times, including five in the MIAC Tournament alone.

St. Thomas claimed three first-place votes and 86 points in the balloting to land at No. 2 in the Poll. The Tommies went 20-17 last season and were on the cusp of the MIAC Playoffs, finishing fifth in the conference with an 11-9 record while suffering four one-run losses in conference play. **Dan Bollingberg** enjoyed a breakout season in his first year as a starter at second base, recording 10 multi-hit games and going 13-for-14 on stolen base attempts. The senior infielder had 40 hits, including an 8-for-8 day at the plate in a doubleheader sweep of Augsburg in the 2019 conference finale. The Toms went 10-3 in games when he drove in a run.

Gustavus garnered a pair of first-place votes and 83 points in the balloting to come in at No. 3. The Gusties clinched their first regular-season MIAC championship since 1980 last spring and have logged four consecutive 20-win seasons. Gustavus returns several key pieces of last year's team to the lineup this spring, including All-MIAC shortstop **Cole Pengilly**. The Le Sueur, Minn. native led the team with 49 hits, 29 runs, eight doubles, two home runs, 65 total bases, and a .512 slugging percentage as a sophomore last year. He also posted 15 multiple-hit games at the plate and made a team-high 91 assists with 35 putouts in the field.

St. Olaf picked up one first-place vote and 77 points to come in at No. 4 in the Poll. The Oles join Saint John's as the two MIAC teams receiving votes in the 2020 D3baseball.com/National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association (NCBWA) Preseason Top 25 Poll. St. Olaf went 27-15 last year and returned to the MIAC Playoffs for the first time in a decade with 13 wins in conference play. The Oles should be set up for success again this spring, returning six positional starters and all but one member of the 2019 pitching staff. All-Region second baseman **Tommy McDonald** leads the group of returners. The senior infielder started 40 of 42 games last spring, collecting 51 hits, 12 doubles, one home run, and a MIAC-best five triples in his debut season as an Ole.

Saint Mary's received 65 points in the balloting to come in at No. 5 in the Preseason Poll. The Cardinals have clinched MIAC Playoff berths in six of the last eight seasons, including back-to-back trips in 2018 and 2019. A key piece of the puzzle for SMU the last two years has been ace right-hander **James Green**. The All-American pitcher posted a near-perfect 8-1 record and a 1.85 earned run average as a sophomore last year. Opponents hit just .194 against Green, who accounted for four of the Cardinal pitching staff's six complete games and boasted a team-high 63 strikeouts — including a career-high 13 against No. 1-ranked Concordia-Chicago last March.

Bethel picked up 58 points to come in at No. 6 in the Preseason Poll. The Royals won their first-ever MIAC Playoff title and clinched a berth in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in program history two years ago and were certainly contenders in 2019, posting a 22-16 overall record with nine wins in conference play. Reliever **Brady Leahy** was a perfect 6-0 on the year with a 3.60 ERA en route to his first MIAC All-Conference honor. Leahy made 19 appearances out of the bullpen and started in one game, allowing 16 runs while striking out 10 in 30 innings of work. He also picked up a team-high three saves, all of which came in one-run ball games.

Concordia is seventh in the Poll with 42 points. The Cobbers earned five conference splits and a pair of sweeps last season. Right-hander **Austin Ver Steeg** will return for his senior season in 2020 after becoming the first Cobber to earn back-to-back ABCA/Rawlings All-Region honors since Kyle Johnson in 2008 and 2009. Ver Steeg finished his junior campaign with a 1.41 ERA in 44.2 innings pitched. In eight starts, Ver Steeg struck out 43, only allowing five extra-base hits and holding opponents to a .194 batting average.

Macalester came in just behind the Cobbers with 41 points in the preseason balloting. The Scots went 10-10 in MIAC play last season, picking up wins against three of the four playoff teams along the way. Third baseman **Michael Moreno** was one of two first-year players to make the All-MIAC squad last year. The Massapequa, N.Y. native emerged as a solid bat in Macalester's lineup, hitting .333 with 32 hits, nine doubles, six home runs, and a team-leading 30 RBI. All six of his home runs came in the final 16 games of the season.

Hamline received 28 points in the balloting. The Pipers were 17-22 overall last season with eight wins in conference play, sweeping two MIAC series and splitting four. **Devin Rodgers** covered a lot of ground in centerfield, finishing last year with 99 putouts and a pair of assists en route to All-Defensive Team honors. The senior speedster also led Hamline with 11 stolen bases, snagging six in conference play.



*Joey Stock and the Johnnies are the preseason favorite to win the MIAC.*

Augsburg is No. 10 in the Poll. The Auggies won nine games last season and return several players to the lineup this spring, including senior first baseman **Donovan Tomony**. Selected to the MIAC All-Defensive Team last May, Tomony committed just two errors in 208 chances with a .990 fielding percentage in 2019. At the plate, the two-year starter registered a hit in 15 of the Auggies' 33 games last season.

Carleton received 12 points in the balloting. The Knights won seven conference games in 2019, including a sweep of eventual playoff champion Saint John's and a split with 2018 playoff champion Bethel. Utility man **Wilson Battle** was effective all over the field last season, driving in 17 runs with a slugging percentage of .452 as a batter in addition to starting six games on the mound where he fanned 25 batters and held opponents to a .241 batting average.

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### **Complete 2020 Preseason Coaches' Poll**

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (10 for first, 9 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.

#### **2020 MIAC Baseball Preseason Coaches' Poll**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Institution (First-Place Votes)</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.	Saint John's (5)	95
2.	St. Thomas (3)	86
3.	Gustavus (2)	83
4.	St. Olaf (1)	77
5.	Saint Mary's	65
6.	Bethel	58
7.	Concordia	42
8.	Macalester	41
9.	Hamline	28
10.	Augsburg	18
11.	Carleton	12

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### **2020 MIAC Baseball Playoffs**

The 2020 MIAC Baseball Playoffs will once again emanate from CHS Field in St. Paul, Minn. This will be the third year in a row that the four-team tournament will be played at the home of the Hamline Pipers and St. Paul Saints. The double-elimination playoff will be held Thursday, May 7 – Saturday, May 9, 2020. The winner of the 2020 MIAC Baseball Playoffs will receive the Conference's automatic bid to the 2020 NCAA Division III Baseball Tournament.

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### **Odds and Ends**

-Several MIAC teams will get a taste of early-season non-conference action at U.S. Bank Stadium this year. However, plenty will also be hitting the road for spring games in five other states including Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, and Kansas over the next six weeks. With non-conference contests also scheduled in North Dakota and Wisconsin in April, MIAC teams will be playing ball in at least eight different states this season.

-Augsburg became the second MIAC baseball team to travel to Cuba when the Auggies did so in January. The six-day cultural and playing experience marked the team's first-ever international trip in the modern era. St. Thomas is the only other conference program to have played in Cuba, doing so in January 2000.

-Several MIAC players kept their skills sharp by playing in the Northwoods League, a 22-team wood-bat collegiate summer league for high-caliber student-athletes with NCAA eligibility remaining. Included in the MIAC contingent were Saint John's **Ethan Roe** (St. Cloud), **Joey Stock** (St. Cloud), and **Wyatt Ulrich** (Bismarck), and St. Thomas' **Andrew Tri** (Eau Claire). Ulrich was named to the Northwoods League All-Star Team last July, while Stock was selected by a panel of Major League Baseball scouts to participate in the NWL Major League Dreams Showcase last August.

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### **Celebrating a Century**

The MIAC is celebrating its 100-year anniversary throughout the 2019-20 season. The conference's Centennial celebration will highlight the many outstanding moments, memories, and individuals who helped build the MIAC over the last century. Initiatives will include student-athlete, coach, and administrator spotlights, historical photos showcasing the evolution of MIAC sports and teams through the years, recognition of former MIAC student-athletes who continued their time in the conference as coaches and administrators, and more. The official #MIAC100 webpage is housed at <https://www.miacathletics.com/miac100>.