

2009-10 MIAC Men's Basketball Season Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. -- Another exciting year of MIAC Men's Basketball is set to begin as the 11 conference teams prepare to hit the hardwood for their first non-conference contests. The race for MIAC Championship and the push for the six spots in the conference playoffs should be as competitive as ever in 2009-2010.

St. Thomas, winner of the last four MIAC titles, is placed atop the 2009-10 MIAC Preseason Coaches' Poll. The Tommies garnered 10 first place votes and are followed by Saint John's and Gustavus. Bethel and Carleton tied for fourth in the poll with Augsburg placing sixth. Bethel received the other first place vote.



Non-conference contests begin on Sunday, November 15 and the first conference games will take place on Wednesday, December 2.

2009-10 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 (10)
2. Saint John's
3. Gustavus
- 4 (tie). Bethel (1)
- 4 (tie). Carleton
6. Augsburg
7. Concordia
8. Hamline
9. St. Olaf
10. Saint Mary's
11. Macalester

2009-10 MIAC Playoff Dates

Quarterfinals (Tuesday, February 23), Semifinals (Thursday, February 25), Finals (Saturday, February 27).

| [2009-10 MIAC Schedule](#) | [2008-09 MIAC Statistics](#) | [MIAC Recordbook](#) | [MIAC Archives](#) |



Augsburg

Coach: Aaron Griess

Career Record: 41-61 (4 seasons at Augsburg)

2008-09 Finish: Tied-3rd (12-8 MIAC, 15-12 overall)

Augsburg Season Preview

The Augsburg College men's basketball team returns four starters and 13 letterwinners from a squad that finished tied for third in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference standings last season, advancing to the semifinals of the MIAC postseason playoffs for the first time in coach Aaron Griess' tenure.

Augsburg represents the only team in the MIAC to improve their winning percentage the last three seasons consecutively and, according to Griess, constant improvement will be the theme for the Auggies again this season.

"Our goal is to go out and play each game trying to improve. We have improved talent, work ethic and team chemistry and we are looking to keep that going," said Griess, entering his fifth season at Augsburg.

Veteran guards Jon Cassens (SR, Prior Lake, Minn.) and David Olson (SR, Lindstrom, Minn./Chisago Lakes HS) will lead the Auggies as they make a push to return to the top of the MIAC standings. Cassens, an All-MIAC performer last season, led the MIAC in assists per-game (4.41), averaging 32.6 minutes per-game, 12.0 points per-game and 2.7 rebounds per-game and will again be looked at to captain the Augsburg offense.

Olson also returns to the guard position due to the change in the MIAC's redshirt transfer rule, which allowed him to gain back a previous year of eligibility. Olson averaged 27.2 minutes per-game last season and was the Auggies leading defender, ranking third in the conference in steals per-game (1.67), while averaging 10.8 points and 3.4 rebounds per-game.

Also returning on the perimeter will be the duo of Ben Flavin (JR, Lakeville, Minn./Lakeville North HS) and Matthew Quammen (JR, Victoria, Minn./Holy Family HS). The duo combined for just over 37 minutes per-game last season with Quammen leading the Auggies in three-point field goals (38), while Flavin connected on 23-of-64 (.359) from behind the arc.

Other returners that are expected to contribute at the forward position will be Brett Sorenson (SO, Lakeville, Minn./Lakeville South HS) and Anthony Humphrey (JR, Minneapolis, Minn./DeLaSalle HS). Sorenson averaged 20 minutes per-game last year and gained valuable experience in his first year under the Auggie system. Humphrey transferred to Augsburg at the semester break last year and connected on an impressive 7-of-18 (.389) from behind the three-point arc.

Despite the loss of All-MIAC and All-West Region preformer Nate Alm to graduation, the Auggies return All-MIAC First-Year honoree Andy Grzesiak-Grimm (SO, Wyoming, Minn./St. Francis HS) and Cory Polta (SO, Spring Lake Park, Minn.). Grzesiak-Grimm averaged 26 minutes, 9.3 points and 5.0 rebounds per-game in his Auggie debut season, while Polta averaged 3.4 points per-game, with an impressive .549 field goal percentage.

"Cory has done an exceptional job throughout the preseason. He is emerging as a leader in the program on an off the floor. His development is continuing on the floor and we're looking for big things from him as he gains more experience in game situations," commented Griess.

With the large number of returners and mix of talented newcomers, the Auggies are optimistic about the upcoming season. "Our returning leadership will be a big key for us this year. In any season there are ups and downs and if anyone understands this, it's our returners. It's important for us to keep an even keel throughout the year and bring maximum concentration, intensity, and energy every time we take the floor."



Bethel

Coach: Jeff Westlund

Career Record: 54-26 (3 seasons at Bethel)

2008-09 Finish: 2nd (14-6 MIAC, 20-7 overall)

Bethel Season Preview

The race to be run by the 2009-2010 Bethel Royals will be led by a terrific trio of seniors who have sacrificed, worked, and committed themselves to pulling our team together. Rob Lang (Johnston, IA) is a 6'4" swing man who shoots it well (50% in 2008-09) and is a stop-em-all-type perimeter defender. He is a returning starter whose maturity and game presence give our team a leader who is a great decision maker. At 6'8", Nate Robertson (Forest Lake H.S.) is a returning starter whose mental and physical toughness along with his inside scoring skills and provides rebounding prowess our team with a consistent and proven inside presence. Last season Nate averaged 8.7 ppg, 6.6 rpg, and shot 51% from the field. His passion to play, basketball intelligence, and competitiveness are the crucial elements of leadership that he brings to our team's foundation.

The MIAC's Sixth Man of the Year in 2008-2009, Chris Vavra (Braham H.S.) is a 6'0" guard/lead-guard who has good perimeter scoring skills and can attack in the open court. In 2008-2009 he shot 37.6% from the 3-point line, and 75% from the free throw line. His positive voice in the locker room, great rapport with his teammates, and his intense court demeanor are examples of how leaders carry themselves under the pressure of competition.

These senior leaders will be flanked by three other returners with varsity experience.

JD Robinson (Armstrong H.S.) voted by his teammates as the Most Improved Player in 2008-2009, is a 6'5" senior swingman with good perimeter shooting skills and the ability to defend and rebound. At 6'1", Kellan Dahlquist (So., Foley, Minn.) the program's 2008-2009 Rookie-of-the-Year has the toughness, work ethic, and competitiveness to be a scorer both inside and outside while giving a terrific presence on the glass. Coming fresh off of an exceptional soccer season for the Royals, Zach Hurd (Jr., Portage, Mich.) plays the lead-guard and off-guard with great court presence and mental toughness.

Joining these six returners is a terrific recruiting class. Newcomers to the varsity include several transfers and freshman. Sophomores Eric Hugoson, (So., Fairmont, Minn.) and Daniel Baah, (So., Lakeville, Minn.), and transfers Taylor Hall, (So., Spring Lake Park, Minn.) and Elliot Risbrudt, (So., Ashby, Minn.) will be contributors right away.

The 2009-2010 team will pull together on the court by playing with intense, full court defensive pressure and an up-tempo offensive style. In the half-court, the Royals have good offensive decision makers who take care of the ball and can get to the rim. Limiting the opponent's field goal percentage and rebounding to finish defensive possessions will be the result of a hawking style of play. The blend of experienced and skilled senior leaders with the athletic ability, basketball skills, and intensity of our other returning players and newcomers, will give our fans a high energy, well executed style of play that will light up the Robertson Center.



Carleton

Coach: Guy Kalland

Career Record: 345-292 (25 seasons)

2008-09 Finish: Tied-3rd (12-8 MIAC, 16-10 overall)

Carleton Season Preview

The 2009-2010 Carleton College men's basketball team returns seven players who saw significant playing time last year, including four starters at the end of the season. The Knights also welcome three talented first-year players as Carleton pursues a return to the MIAC playoffs for the eighth consecutive season.

The Knights graduated all-time leading scorer and All-American Zach Johnson '09, who paced the team in points (22.8 ppg) and produced over a third of the Carleton's offense a year ago. He also was among the team leaders in almost every statistical category.

The rosters' two seniors are Bryan Rosset (Cottage Grove, Minn./Park) and Morris Nwogwugwu (Humble, Texas/Chinquapin School). Rosset was tabbed first team All-MIAC last year after being one of only three players to be among the leaders in points (12.4), rebounds (8.3), and assists (2.7) during league games. The 6-foot-6-inch forward was also named to the five-player MIAC all-defensive team as well for his efforts on the court. Last year, Rosset was called upon to guard the other team's top offensive player, regardless of size. Nwogwugwu is an explosive player on both ends of the floor who appeared in all 26 games last year, providing a spark off the bench.

After sitting out the last 20 games last season with an injured shoulder, Jeremy Sutherland (Jr./Apple Valley, Minn./St. Bernard's) returns to the Knights lineup. He adds defensive and offensive explosiveness with his length and quickness. He averaged double-digits in points two years ago during his sophomore campaign when the team was 14-3 with him in the lineup.

Juniors Carter Biewen (Golden Valley, Minn./Robbinsdale Armstrong) and Seth Jonker (Apple Valley, Minn./Eastview) both look to contribute again after strong sophomore years. Biewen, a wing, started all 26 games for the Knights averaging 7.2 points per game. Jonker has been the top post player off the bench the last two seasons and provides size in the paint, scoring 8.3 points per game in 2008-09.

Returning to the Knights after a strong rookie campaign is sophomore point guard Blaise Davis (Elk River, Minn.). He was one of five players selected to last year's MIAC all-first year team after shooting 43.4 percent from beyond the arc, good for seventh best in the conference. He also led all conference rookies with a 1.83 assist-to-turnover ratio. Kellan McLemore (So./Aurora, Colo./Rangeview) joins Davis in the backcourt after starting seven games last year. McLemore's impact is can be felt most on the defensive end with his quickness and tireless work ethic.

The Knights bring in three first-year players that will add depth. Tyler Goetz (Chaska, Minn.) adds depth at the post position, Tom Sawatzke (Monticello, Minn.) will help back up Davis at the point, and Scott Theisen (Champlin, Minn./Champlin Park) creates matchup problems on the outside with his 6-foot-6-inch frame.

The Knights will look to their defense, which perennially ranks Carleton towards the top of the MIAC, to lead them on their quest for yet another postseason appearance.



Concordia

Coach: Rich Glas

Career Record: 11-14 (1 season at Concordia)

2008-09 Finish: Tied-7th (8-12 MIAC, 11-14 overall)

Concordia Season Preview

The entire 2009-10 Concordia basketball program spent last season earning valuable experience. Head coach Rich Glas spent the year learning the ins and outs of MIAC basketball and the team found out how to win games with a completely new group of players. The Cobbers won four of their final five games in 2008-09 and were only one spot out of the playoffs. That experience down the stretch should pay dividends to a team that returns all five starters and has their top three scorers back from a year ago.

The glass will be more than half full for Concordia in 2009-10 because Glas returns all his top players from last season. At the top of the list of the returning players is junior forward John Fraase (Bismarck, N.D./Bismarck Century HS) who was named to the MIAC All-Conference Team last season and who will be one of the top players in the conference again this year. Fraase had a breakout year in 2008-09 where he set the school record for average rebounds in a season and was the first player in program history to average at least 10 points and 10 rebounds in a single year. Fraase also had a school record 15 double-doubles during the season. Fraase led the league in rebounds in 2008-09. He averaged 11.8 rebounds per game in the team's 20 league games. He was also fifth in the conference in scoring. He averaged 15.3 point per conference game.

This year's team will be far from a one-man band. With all five starters returning from last year, the Cobbers will have scoring threats from the wing and perimeter. Junior Darrin Olmscheid (Buffalo, Minn.) is a two-year starter that gives opposing team's tough match-up problems on the defensive end. Olmscheid was second on the team in scoring last season with a 11.4 points per game average. He scored in double figures in 11 games and had a career-high 30 points against Gustavus on Jan. 24. Erik Lien (Jr., Moorhead, Minn.) was third on the team in scoring last year after coming off an injury. He averaged 7.2 points per game last year but should return to the form of his freshman season when he was named to the MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention Team.

The Cobber guard corps will be the one unit that will be most helped from the year of experience. Junior Karl Olson (Buffalo, Minn.) returns for his third season as a CC starter. Olson was third in the MIAC in assists last year and should have an even bigger impact in that category this year with the experience of the scorers around him. Joining Olson in the CC backcourt will be sophomore Eric Hartmann (Alexandria, Minn./Jefferson HS). Hartmann played in all 25 games last year and averaged 6.5 points per game. He had at least nine points in five of the last eight games of the year and during that stretch shot 50.9% from the floor and 40.0% from 3-point range.

There will be several other key factors for the Cobbers' success in 2009-10. Sophomore point guard Johnathon Molina (Dilworth, Minn./D-G-F HS) possesses quickness on the dribble that makes him hard to guard on the perimeter. If he can find his shooting touch from the outside, Concordia could have a very good inside-outside scoring punch. Molina will also use his quickness on the defensive end where he can disrupt the opposing team's point guard and not allow the team to get into their half-court offense.

One of the key additions for the Cobbers this year will be the return of center James Baldwin (Hope, N.D./Mayport C-G) HS. Baldwin comes back to the team after taking a year off and gives Concordia another big body in the paint. Baldwin recorded over 100 rebounds in his first two seasons and averaged over 5.0 points during those years. Another big man who could have a breakout year is junior Ryan Hagemeyer (Willmar, Minn.). Hagemeyer averaged 6.2 points last year and his 6-6, 220 frame and two years of MIAC experience will give the Cobbers much-needed depth in the post.

Glas also brought in a bumper class of freshmen. The coaching staff had over 20 new faces on the first day of practice and has six first-year players and one transfer on this year's roster. The infusion of new talent with the experience of the five starters should help the Cobbers get back to the playoffs and make a run for the top five places in the league standings.



Gustavus

Coach: Mark Hanson

Career Record: 371-153 (19 seasons)

2008-09 Finish: 6th (11-9 MIAC, 13-14 overall)

Gustavus Season Preview

The Gustavus men's basketball team returns three starters and six letterwinners from a squad that finished sixth in the conference last season and qualified for the MIAC Playoffs. Senior captains Jesse Van Sickle (Garden City, Minn.) and Ryan McPartland (Le Sueur, Minn.) along with senior post Sam Paulson (Waseca, Minn.) will lead the Gusties as they make a push to return to the top of the MIAC.

On the perimeter, two-year letterwinner Dan Schmidtknecht (LaCrosse, Wis.) will take over at point guard where he backed up Mike DesLauriers last season. Schmidtknecht averaged 2.6 assists per game last season and led the team in steals (29). He has emerged as a leader on the court and will be asked to control the game with his ability to penetrate the lane and get the ball to an open teammate. Joining Schmidtknecht on the perimeter will be veterans Jesse Van Sickle and Phil Wirtjes (Jr., Des Moines, Iowa/Holy Angels). A three-year letterwinner, Van Sickle averaged a team high 26.7 minutes per game while scoring an average 10.4 points per game last season. He led the league in 3-point field goal percentage at 48.6 percent (35-72) and was named to the All-Conference team. Wirtjes scored 3.9 points per game while playing an average of 15 minutes per game. He is a strong defensive player and good ball handler who complements Schmidtknecht and Van Sickle well. On the perimeter sophomores Tyler Gray (Montevideo, Minn.), Seth Anderson (Minnesota Lake, Minn.), and Adam Michel (Belle Plaine, Minn.) return with some varsity experience are likely to move into the regular playing rotation. Six individuals are also battling for spots in the playing rotation on the perimeter. That group includes Ty Moore (Brooklyn Park, MN), Ben Biewen (Edina, Minn.), James Hill (Edina, Minn.), Blake Shay (Lakeville, Minn./South), Peder Beckstrand (Baudette, Minn./Lake of the Woods), and Mat Doble (Sarasota, Florida).

In the post, Gustavus will build around returning starters Sam Paulson (6-9) and Ryan McPartland (6-5). Both Paulson and McPartland gained valuable experience last season and will be expected improve their scoring and consistency this year. The scrappy McPartland led the team in rebounds last year with an average of 5.5 rebounds per game, while scoring 9.7 points per game, while Paulson averaged 9.9 points and 4.9 rebounds per game. Both players received honorable mention All-Conference honors. Sophomore Bobby Johnson (Edina, Minn.) was expected to play a big role inside for the Gusties this season, however a knee injury late in the summer will likely cause him to miss the entire season. Senior Mychal Crowder (Minneapolis, Minn.), and sophomores Paul Blacklock (Winona, Minn.), and Reed Sallstrom (Winthrop, Minn./GFW) will back up Paulson and McPartland in the post.

 **Hamline**
Coach: Nelson Whitmore
Career Record: 17-33 (2 seasons at Hamline)
2008-09 Finish: Tied-7th (8-12 MIAC, 9-16 overall)

Hamline Season Preview

Nelson Whitmore looks for his first MIAC playoff berth in his third season at the helm with a young, talented, and committed 2009-10 Piper squad.

Whitmore returns five players from the 2008-09 campaign that finished 9-16 overall and 8-12 in MIAC play. They Pipers made a late run at the playoffs last season, posting victories in six of their last nine conference games.

One player not back from that team is 2009 Jostens Trophy finalist Tony Thrasher. Thrasher graduated seventh all-time in scoring at Hamline with 1,360 career points and is ninth all-time in rebounds with 452. However, Whitmore returns five strong players from that run and brings in an impressive list of new names.

Heading up the returning corps is one of Whitmore's three captains, center Carl Hipp (Jr., Little Canada, Minn.). Hipp is on pace to finish at the top of several Piper all-time lists by the time he graduates. He is already the school record-holder for blocked shots (119) and is just outside the top ten in rebounds with 368 after only two seasons.

Last year he was the second-leading scorer on the team, averaging 12.0 points per game overall and 13.1 points per game in conference play. He pulled down 210 boards, including 104 in the final 10 games against Division III opponents. In MIAC play he averaged 9.1 rebounds per outing. Hipp had a tremendous off-season and is much stronger entering his junior campaign as Whitmore will continue to use him to anchor the middle.

Whitmore also returns a pair of strong shooters in Dan Andersen (Sr., Minneapolis, Minn.) and Brandon Rieg (So., Riverside, Calif.). Andersen is effective outside the arc, last year going 32-for-74 from three-point land (.432). He entered 2008-09 after not having played for a couple of years and is now more comfortable and confident on the court at the start of his second year back. Andersen averaged 6.8 points per game last year.

Rieg didn't see a lot of minutes on the court last season, but Whitmore expects to use him more this year. He has one of the best shots on the team and has also had a strong off-season.

Rounding out Whitmore's returners are his other two captains, Nick Carroll (Sr., Mendota Heights, Minn.) and Levi Wenrich (So., Newhall, Calif.). Carroll is a defensive stopper and brings strong leadership to the team – both on and off the court. He is a tough, gritty player who plays with a great deal of heart on the floor.

Although just a sophomore, Wenrich has quickly become a strong leader on the court as the Pipers' point guard. He dished out 70 assists last year and average 5.0 points per game. He also had 17 steals.

Hipp, Andersen, Carroll, and Wenrich all bring familiarity with the MIAC and Whitmore's game into the 2009-10 season – they comprise four of the five players who saw time in all 25 games last season.

Joining the returning five are nine impressive new players, many of whom will make an impact on the hardwood immediately. A pair of players who Whitmore expects to light up the scoreboard early on are Noah Aguirre (Fy., Fillmore, Calif.), a 6-5 forward, and Jordan Schmidt (Fy., Northbrook, Ill.), a 6-0 guard. Aguirre averaged 22.2 points per game in his senior season and Schmidt was an all-conference player in his senior year.

Also joining the roster is point guard Victor Easter (Fy., Minneapolis, Minn.). Easter is a talented athlete and one of the better passers in the Piper program. He will challenge Wenrich for time in leading the Piper offense down the floor.

Andy Voigt (Fy., Cottage Grove, Minn.) comes from a strong basketball family – his older sister started at the University of Minnesota as a first-year player. He is a 6-5 forward who will also see a lot of playing time early in his career.

Rounding out Whitmore's new impact players is Ray Brown (Sr., Saint Paul, Minn.), a 2005 runner-up for Mr. Basketball. Brown played for two years at Division I Bradley University and was a member of their NCAA Sweet 16 team during the 2005-06 season. He has returned home to the Twin Cities to be closer to his family and finish out his career with the Pipers. Brown is a tremendous scorer and passer and will bring maturity to the list of new comers to Hutton Arena.

Whitmore's team is young, but they are a talented and committed group. The players are a hard-working corps that can only be classified as "gym rats" for their passion and dedication to improving over the off-season. The Pipers will be a tougher, more athletic team on the court in 2009-10 as they look to jump into the MIAC top six and play into March this year.

Macalester



Coach: Tim Whittle

Career Record: 0-0 (1st season)

2008-09 Finish: 11th (0-20 MIAC, 0-25 overall)

Macalester Season Preview

New head coach Tim Whittle comes to Macalester from Washington University in St. Louis, where he was the top assistant for the two-time defending NCAA Division III champions, and is looking to bring that type of excellence to St. Paul as he builds the Macalester program. In addition to winning the national crown the last two seasons, Washington University went to the Final Four the past three years.

"Coming off back-to-back national championships, I believe I am ready to guide my own program and Macalester provides an ideal setting for student-athletes to excel academically and athletically," says Whittle. "The Alumni Gymnasium and the entire Leonard Center are signs of the commitment by the administration to make athletics an extension of the classroom." said Mac's new head coach. "I am ecstatic to have this opportunity to lead Mac basketball into tomorrow by finding true student-athletes who want the best of both worlds – strong academics and competitive athletics."

Coach Whittle and the Scots have been hard at work during pre-season practices since mid-October and it is clear that Macalester will be a much-improved team in the MIAC.

The Scots return four starters and nine letter-winners from last year's team, while adding four newcomers to the mix. "We are excited to welcome the Class of 2013," says Whittle. "Each player brings something different to this program and as a group they make an immediate impact in building a successful program at Macalester."

Several veterans will be asked to continue to show improvement and increase their roles.

Forwards Colin Keely (Jr., Kildeer, Ill. / Stevenson) and Jerry Kraus (Sr., Bucharest, Romania / Chapparral – Colo.) return in the frontcourt for the Scots, while guards Paul Richie (Sr., Grand Rapids, Minn.) and Kyle Hamblett (Jr., Paris, France / American School of Paris) return in the backcourt. Point guard Holden Bigler-Johnson (Jr., Austin, Tex. / Anderson) is back after being sidelined last season with an injury.

Keeley missed the final seven games with a broken hand, but was Mac's top point producer with a 13.8 scoring mark. Hamblett shot 49% from the floor and contributed 11.7 points and 1.6 steals a night. Richie was the team's top three-point shooter with 46 on the year, while averaging 9.2 points and 1.7 steals. Tyler Gubbrud (So., Naples, Fla.) led the team in minutes off the bench.

This year's team will be a blend of veterans and newcomers, as talented frosh forward Pierce Peters (Glenwood, Minn. / Minnewaska Area), center Andy Bowman (Perry, Kan. / Perry-Lecompton), guard Colin Jarvis (Madison, Wis. / West) and guard Nic Lechault (Geneva, Switzerland / International School of Geneva) are expected to play major roles right off the bat.

"The MIAC is always tough and is one of the most competitive Division III conferences in the country," comments Whittle. "The league is filled with quality coaches and players, and provides a great college basketball atmosphere."

Saint John's



Coach: Jim Smith

Career Record: 699-487 (45 seasons)

2008-09 Finish: Tied-3rd (12-8 MIAC, 14-12 overall)

Saint John's Season Preview

Saint John's University basketball coach Jim Smith begins his 46th season one win shy of 700 for his career entering the 2009-10 season. His 699 career victories rank him second all-time among NCAA Division III head coaches and 27th all-time in college basketball history.

Smith returns four starters and an experienced group of players as Saint John's seeks to improve on last season's 12-8 third-place finish in the MIAC and a 14-12 record overall.

A key returnee to the Johnnies' backcourt is sophomore point guard Andy Burns (Shorewood, Minn./Minnetonka). Burns started all but one game last season as a freshman and ranked second in the MIAC with 100 assists. He also averaged 32.1 minutes per game, good for second on the team, and was named to the five-man MIAC All-First Year team.

Sophomore Ryan Brown (Forest Lake, Minn.) played in six games last season but will look to increase his playing time this year at the point guard position. Sophomore Patrick Bowlin (Winona, Minn./Cotter) and freshman Sam Dittberner (New Prague, Minn.) will also compete for time at point guard.

Junior Sam Blank (Rollingstone, Minn./Winona Cotter) will compete for playing time at the No. 2 wing position this season. Blank played in 23 games last season and started one. He averaged 4.3 points per game in just 12.9 minutes per game last winter and finished the season with a .481 field-goal percentage.

Sophomore Andrew Latzke (Shorewood, Minn./Minnetonka) will also be in the mix this season. He played in all 26 games and started three last season, averaging 5.7 points per game while shooting at a .358 clip as a freshman. Senior Michael Braun (Hopkins, Minn.) must overcome an injury and could contribute significantly if healthy this season. Sophomore Bennett Vathing (Plymouth, Minn./Robbinsdale Armstrong) and freshmen Josh Hibbison (Monticello, Minn.) and Chris Neumann (Winsted, Minn./Holy Trinity) will also vie for playing time this winter.

The Johnnies need to replace point guard Brandon Budach and wing Cole Isetts, who both graduated last spring. Both Budach and Isetts were leaders for the Johnnies last season both on and off the court. The two combined for 189 points, 72 rebounds, 31 assists and a shooting percentage of .539.

The frontcourt will feature a pair of talented and experienced juniors, Aaron Burtzel (Cold Spring, Minn./Rocori) and Chris Schwartz (Sioux Falls, S.D./Lincoln). Burtzel was the only player to start all 26 games for the Johnnies last season. He led the team in field goal percentage (.595), minutes per game (33.5), rebounds per game (9.1), blocked shots (20) and steals (35). He was also second on the team in assists (96) and third in points per game (11.3). Burtzel finished second in the MIAC in field goal percentage, third in assists, and fourth in rebounds and minutes played.

Schwartz started 25 games last season and led the Johnnies in scoring with 12.9 points per game. He ended the season third in the MIAC with 53 three-point field goals and was named MIAC honorable mention.

Sophomore Aaron Barmore (Bloomington, Minn./Jefferson) also returns after playing in all 26 games with 25 starts a year ago. Barmore averaged 29.7 minutes per game and 7.8 points per game. Barmore was the team's best free-throw shooter with a free-throw percentage of .820. He was also second on the team in rebounds per game (4.2) and third in assists (43).

Smith will also welcome back junior Todd Herman (Spicer, Minn./New London-Spicer), who started 10 of the 11 games he played in. Herman averaged 11.5 points per game before missing the second half of the season.

Sophomores Garrett Bassett (Eagan, Minn.) and Chris Tengwall (Spicer, Minn./New London-Spicer) are expected to see significant time at the post position this season. Bassett appeared in 25 games for SJU as a freshman. His size (6-foot-10) is sure to be an asset to the SJU post position. Tengwall brings another athletic body to the table. Last season, he appeared in six games and averaged 1.3 points and 1.2 rebounds per game.

Other key options for the Johnnies post position include juniors David Redfield (Eagan, Minn.) and Nermin Hujdurovic (Tuzla, Bosnia/Medical). Redfield played in 16 games for the Johnnies last season and averaged close to five minutes per game, while Hujdurovic appeared in five games for SJU last year. Freshman Chris Orgas (Lakeville, Minn./North) will add size and strength (6-foot-7, 250 pounds) at post this season.



Saint Mary's

Coach: Todd Landrum

Career Record: 7-18 (1 season)

2008-09 Finish: 10th (6-14 MIAC, 7-18 overall)

Saint Mary's Season Preview

A year ago, Saint Mary's University men's basketball coach Todd Landrum and his coaching staff planted the seeds.

Now, a year later, let the watering begin.

"I'm excited to go to practice every day," said Landrum, who is entering his second year at the Cardinals head coach. "It's just so much fun to watch how hard the guys are working, to see size, speed and daily competition.

"We're off to a great start."

Landrum will be the first to admit that last year was a learning experience - both for himself and for the Cardinals.

A learning experience that is already paying dividends.

"I learned a lot from last year," said Landrum, who guided the Cardinals to a 7-18 record in his first season. "My expectations are always high, and more than anything, I learned patience - we started with little steps and built our way up."

All the way up to a big, season-ending win over playoff-bound Augsburg.

"That was a nice way to close out the season," Landrum said. "The guys worked hard all season, and to end the year with a big win like that was a great boost."

Also giving the Cardinals a boost is the return of a solid junior class, led by All-Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference selections Will Wright (Chicago, Ill.) and Lukas Holland (La Crosse, Wis.).

Their numbers speak for themselves - Wright boasted a team-best 18.8 ppg scoring average a year ago, while Holland finished at 15.6 ppg. Wright's 18.8 ppg average was the highest by a Cardinal since Donald Jordan averaged 24.5 ppg during the 1994-95 season. Wright and Holland were also ranked No.

3 and No. 4 in the MIAC in scoring, respectively, while Holland led the league in free-throw attempts (114), was second in free throws made (101) and fourth in free-throw percentage (.860), and Wright was first in steals (35, 1.75 spg).

But for Landrum, what's even more impressive is the emergence of the two as on- and off-the-court leaders.

"(Holland and Wright) have really embraced what it means to lead this team," said Landrum. "To be a successful program, the coach can not do all the leading - leadership in the locker room and on the floor - has to come from the players. And Lukas and Will - and (fellow juniors) Patrick Connolly (Chicago, Ill.), Matt Murphy (Woodbury Minn.) and Pat Freeman (Champlin, Minn.) - have all accepted that role. They have all taken the younger guys under their wing."

"It's fun to hear those guys telling the younger players this year the same things I was telling them last year."

And the message is a simple one: It's time to start growing as a program.

"We got the ball rolling last year," Landrum said. "Now we need to keep it going."



St. Olaf

Coach: Dan Kosmoski

Career Record: 151-210 (15 seasons)

2008-09 Finish: 9th (7-13 MIAC, 10-15 overall)

St. Olaf Season Preview

In 2009-10, the St. Olaf College men's basketball season returns its top three and five of its top six scorers from last winter's team in hopes of climbing the MIAC standings.

The Oles finished 10-15 overall and 7-13 in league play in 2008-09 behind a balanced roster that included a first year class that burst on the scene. That group, with a core of experienced juniors and seniors will be the go-to formula this season.

Senior guard Mark Torell returns as the only player that started every game last year. His junior season was a good one, as he averaged 8.1 points/game. Most impressive was his demonstration that he could be one of the best three-point weapons in the league as he went 7-for-7 from the arc in a Jan. 19 win over Concordia and 6-for-7 in a Feb. 7 loss to Bethel.

Joe Weber, another three-point specialist, is the other senior on the team. Weber played in all 25 games last year and shot 40.1 percent from the arc in just over 10 minutes a night.

The team's junior class is led by Nate Krosschell, who played in every game and started 10 last year, and guard Tucker Sheley. Krosschell was the team's second-leading scorer in 2008-09 as he started nine of the last 10 games. He averaged 11.3 points/game during the stretch and was a 44.0 percent shooter from the field. Sheley started the team's final four games and could get a more enhanced role this season.

Sophomores Alfred Jaryan, Bobby Fong, Stu Neville and Mark Wieloch could have breakout seasons in 2009-10. Fong was the team's leading scorer (12.8 points/game) last year while the other three, who provided quality production off the bench, will see more minutes this season. Jaryan will start and run the point while Neville is expected to be the team's starting power forward. Wieloch, who was in double figures three times in 2008-09, will get more time this year.

Two other sophomores – forwards Kevin Lochner and Nick Ramsay – could also see some minutes and the three or four spots.

The team's other reserve forwards are junior Luke Peterson and first year Andrew Sathoff, a product of Mankato West.



St. Thomas

Coach: Steve Fritz

Career Record: 541-239 (29 seasons)

2008-09 Finish: 1st (20-0 MIAC, 30-1 overall)

St. Thomas Season Preview

St. Thomas is ranked fourth in the 2009-2010 preseason men's basketball poll by D3Hoops.com. Coach Steve Fritz graduated three starters from last winter's 30-1 team that reached the national quarterfinals in Division III and was ranked first nationally for five weeks.

Fritz starts his 30th season with a 541-239 (.694) record (427-147, .744 in MIAC regular-season play). He returns nine of the top 14 players from 2008-09. Several promising freshmen -- including two who are transfers -- are expected to push for playing time. The Toms take a 23-game conference win streak into this winter.

For the first time in 95 seasons, St. Thomas will play its home games off campus. The Tommies won their last 46 MIAC games at Schoenecker, but that gym was razed last summer to make way for the new Anderson Athletic and Recreation Facility. During the construction of the new arena, the Tommies will play seven home games two miles away at Concordia University. They also play three conference home games one mile away at Macalester -- Dec. 5 against St. Olaf; Jan. 18 vs. Hamline; and Jan. 30 vs. Macalester.

UST graduated four important players in three-year starter Lonnie Robinson along with B.J. Viau, Al McCoy and Brett Tuma. Over the last four seasons, that quartet helped St. Thomas post the top winning percentage out of 400-plus Division III men's basketball teams with a 100-16 record and .8620 win%. They also became the first group in MIAC history in a four-year span to win 100 games and win all four conference regular-season and playoff championships.

Robinson, a defensive stopper, was a key part of Tommie basketball and baseball teams that won 15 of a possible 16 MIAC team championships in the regular season and playoffs.

Senior All-American shooting guard Joe Scott and junior point guard Tyler Nicolai lead the returners. Scott (204 career treys) and Nicolai (110 treys in 59 games) have started every game the last two seasons and have helped UST compile a 53-6 record in their era, including a 41-3 conference record. Scott has scored more than 1,100 career points, including his freshman year as a starter at Division II Colorado-Colorado Springs.

The 2008-09 conference Player of the Year, Scott made third-team All-American by the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC). He was named to the Preseason All-America team by The Sporting News Basketball Magazine and D3Hoops.com. Scott led UST in scoring at 13.4 points a game while playing less than 28 minutes. He made 71 treys at a 41% clip in 31 games. He shot 70% from the foul line, and in MIAC play shot 52% from the field and 44% from 3-point range, while leading the conference with 1.75 steals a game. When Scott has scored 17 or more points on his career, the Tommies are 24-1.

Center David Baker (69 games, 225 points, 120 rebounds) is passing up his senior season. The Tommies' inside game will be led by 6-8 junior Anders Halvorsen (313 points in 59 games) and two seniors, 6-4 Josh Peltier and 6-6 Sam Eicher. Three freshmen front-liners on the varsity are 6-6 Josh Pedretti of Maple Grove, 6-5 Garrett Maloney of Milwaukee Marquette High, and 6-5 Jake Lippert of Farmington. Pedretti was a two-time all-conference player and made the 40-man roster for last April's Minnesota Coaches' All-Star Series. Maloney was Wisconsin honorable mention all-state, conference Player of the Year and a 15 ppg scorer as a senior. Sophomore Tommy Hannon, the tallest center at 6-7, is up from the Tommie junior varsity team.

Other experienced players in the guard/small forward role are juniors Alex Healy (53 games, 218 points) and Brady Ervin; senior Teddy Archer; and sophomore Peter Leslie. Junior point guard Chandler Sentell is up from the Tommies' junior varsity.

Two transfers who add to the depth have four years of eligibility left. Noah Kaiser, who was injured last season at St. John's, was Leslie's high school teammate on a 2008 state tourney qualifier at Henry Sibley. John Nance, a Cretin-Derham Hall graduate, was a scholarship football player at QB for the Minnesota Gophers.

Another guard on the varsity is freshman Will DeBerg of Edina, a 1,000-point career scorer for the Hornets and an honorable mention all-stater as a senior.