

# 2016-17 MIAC Men's Basketball Preview and Preseason Coaches' Poll

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## 2016-17 MIAC Men's Basketball Season Preview

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – The 2015-16 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) men's basketball season ended in unforgettable fashion, with confetti falling from the ceiling as the University of St. Thomas hoisted the NCAA Division III Men's Basketball National Championship trophy. Now, with the 2016-17 season about to tip off, that excitement is bubbling up again as the league's teams set out to once again prove the MIAC's standing as one of the best conferences in the nation.

Once the confetti was done falling, St. Thomas had a 30-3 overall record and a six-game winning streak through an unbelievably difficult national tournament field. Head Coach John Tauer and his team also posted an 18-2 record in conference play to win their 11th-straight MIAC championship. UST graduated a lot of key players, but always seem to reload, and this time around they'll be seeking their 12th-straight MIAC crown, a repeat national title, and a third Division III championship in seven seasons.

Perhaps one of the most impressive facts about the MIAC's strength and depth in 2015-16 is that the national champions didn't even win their own conference tournament. St. Olaf (19-10, 14-6 MIAC) won its second MIAC Playoff title in three seasons with a win over the Tommies, and Head Coach Dan Kosmoski's club was just a few points away from a second-straight Sweet 16 appearance after reaching the second round of the NCAA tourney.

Concordia (16-10, 13-7 MIAC) and Saint John's (19-8, 13-7 MIAC) shared third place a year ago with Bethel (18-9, 12-8 MIAC) just a game behind that duo in fifth. Augsburg (15-11) and Carleton (13-12) shared sixth place at 10-10 with the Auggies earning the sixth and final MIAC Playoff bid on tiebreaker criteria, and Gustavus (12-13, 9-11 MIAC) was also in the Playoff hunt until the very end. Saint Mary's (9-16, 7-13 MIAC), Hamline (4-21, 2-18 MIAC) and Macalester (4-21, 2-18 MIAC) rounded out the final spots of the 2015-16 standings.

In addition to the Tommies' run to the title and St. Olaf's postseason success, the MIAC proved to be an elite league a year ago with more than half (six) of its teams winning at least 15 games and 7-of-11 teams finishing above .500, with an eighth just a game below even. With the top two teams graduating a lot of key players and returning and incoming talent back throughout the conference, the 2016-17 season could be as deep and as balanced a season as the MIAC has seen in some time, and it's going to be quite a battle for the conference championship, six Playoff spots, and postseason tournament title.

## COACHES CAST THEIR VOTES

Even though the Tommies said goodbye to many of the key contributors from the national title team, the MIAC coaches still the conference is theirs to win for a 12<sup>th</sup>-straight season. UST received seven first-place votes and 95 total points to finish atop the 2016-17 MIAC Men's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll by a single point. Tauer is certainly glad to have star guard Grant Shaeffer and starting forward Ryan Boll back in the lineup, and senior center Jordan Burich figures to have an expanded role, but the Tommies will need to replace five seniors on their quest to repeat.

Bethel is expected to be St. Thomas' top challenger for the title, and could be the team to finally end UST's run in the MIAC, as the Royals received four first-place votes and 94 points to finish just a point behind the defending champs in the MIAC poll. Head Coach Doug Novak has a loaded, experienced team back in 2016-17 with two-time All-MIAC guards Bridgeport Tusler and Brycen Wojta running the show and All-Conference/All-Defensive Team guard Trevor Hall also back to give Bethel the deepest backcourt in the league.

Augsburg and Saint John's are also expected to be in the title hunt and Playoff field, as each received 74 points to share third place in the MIAC Preseason Coaches' Poll. All-MIAC star forward Collin Olmscheid is back for the Auggies to bolster their high hopes, along with talented guards Harry Sonie and Richie Perea. Saint John's graduated a pair of decorated guards, but the Johnnies hope to reload behind sophomore guard David Stokman, junior wing Patrick Strom and junior post Tyler Weiss.

The two Northfield schools also figure to be in the MIAC Playoff picture, as Carleton was picked to finish fifth with 59 points, and St. Olaf was just five points back with 54 in sixth place. The Knights have one of the MIAC's best players back in All-Region star forward Kevin Grow, and senior guards Mitchell Biewen and Peter Bakker-Arkema contribute to the team's high hopes. The Oles also graduated a ton of talent from its NCAA-Tournament team, but hope senior forwards Austin Majeskie and Robert Tobroxen can keep St. Olaf in MIAC



championship and NCAA title contention again in 2016-17.

Gustavus received 45 points to finish seventh in the poll, with Macalester in eighth with 39 points, as both also hope to contend for a trip to the MIAC Playoffs this season. The Gusties have Riley Sharbono and AJ Hatchett back on the wings, while Peter Kruize is back in the post in St. Peter. The Scots hope to have their best team in years with senior Kareem Ismail and Dylan Kilgour back to finish their decorated careers, and sophomore Michael Gutierrez hoping to take another step forward after a great rookie campaign.

Concordia (33 points), Saint Mary's (25 points) and Hamline (13) points rounded out the final three spots in the poll. The Cobbers hope to return to the MIAC Playoffs behind the senior trio of Dylan Alderman, Zach Kinny and Austin Nelson. Saint Mary's showed improvement in 2015-16 and hopes to keep moving up the standings behind its own senior leadership, including Willie Ferron, Quashingm Smith-Pugh and Aaron Romportl. Hamline has Honorable Mention guard Zach Smith back to run the show, and sophomore forwards Connor Knutson and Isaac Brooks back to anchor things in the paint.

The 2016-17 season tips off Tuesday, Nov. 15 with eight of the league's 11 teams playing on opening night. Conference play starts Wednesday, Nov. 30, and will run through Saturday, Feb. 18, when the MIAC champion will be crowned and six Playoff bids will be finalized.

Speaking of the MIAC Playoffs, this marks the first year of a new rotation where men and women will alternate postseason schedules each year. The men have traditionally been on a Wednesday-Friday-Sunday schedule, but this year they'll flip to Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday, with Playoff games on Feb. 21, 23 and 25. Each game will tip off at 7 p.m., giving the title game a prime-time slot on Saturday night.

The NCAA Tournament will follow after that to conclude what promises to be another exciting year on the courts of the conference, and to see if St. Thomas can defend its national title or if another MIAC team can make a splash in the big dance.

### A CLOSER LOOK

The rest of the 2016-17 MIAC Men's Basketball Preview contains complete results from the 2016-17 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](http://www.miacathletics.com) - will be an outstanding source for MIAC men's basketball news, schedules, scores, stats and more throughout the 2016-17 season.

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

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### 2016-17 MIAC Men's Basketball 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.

2016-17 MIAC Men's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll		
Rank	Institution	Total
1.	St. Thomas (7)	95
2.	Bethel (4)	94
T3.	Augsburg	74
T3.	Saint John's	74
5.	Carleton	59
6.	St. Olaf	54
7.	Gustavus	45
8.	Macalester	39
9.	Concordia	33
10.	Saint Mary's	25
11.	Hamline	13

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### 2017 MIAC Men's Basketball Playoffs

The 2017 MIAC Playoffs will feature the top six teams in the conference standings playing in a high-seed-host, single-elimination postseason tournament. This year, the men's and women's Playoffs will flip days, with the men playing Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday, including a much-anticipated 7 p.m. for the Saturday night final.

The two top seeds will receive a bye to the semifinal round, while the No. 3 seed will host the No. 6 seed, and the No. 4 seed will host the No. 5 seeds during the quarterfinals, which will be held Tuesday, Feb. 21. The top remaining seed will play at the No. 2 seed and the lowest remaining seed will play at the No. 1 seed during the semifinals, which are scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 23. The championship game is set for Saturday, Feb. 25, at 7 p.m., with the two semifinal winners meeting on home court of the top remaining seed. The winner will receive

the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2016 NCAA Division III Men's Basketball Tournament.

| [2017 MIAC Men's Basketball Playoffs Home Page](#) |

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## MIAC Men's Basketball Links

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

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## Team-by-Team Previews

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

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**AUGSBURG** | [Auggies' men's basketball home page](#) |

### Head coach

- Aaron Griess (12th season)

### A Year Ago

- 10-10 MIAC (t-6th place) | 15-11 Overall

### In the 2015-16 Postseason

- Lost to Saint John's University in the MIAC Quarterfinals

### Players to Watch

- Collin Olmscheid (F, Jr. | All-MIAC (2015-16), All-MIAC Honorable Mention and MIAC All-First Year Team (2014-15)...Led the MIAC in minutes per-game (35.4 mpg)...Led the team and was fourth in the MIAC in scoring (17.5 ppg)...Led the team with 156 rebounds.
- Harry Sonie (G, Jr. | Averaged 8.7 points, 2.6 rebounds and 2.6 assists per-game)
- Richie Perea (G, Sr. | Averaged 6.0 points, 3.3 assists and 2.6 rebound per-game)

### Did You Know?

- Augsburg has made the MIAC Playoffs six of the last eight years under the direction of Head Coach Aaron Griess.
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**BETHEL** | [Royals' men's basketball home page](#) |

### Head coach

- Doug Novak (4th season)

### A Year Ago

- 12-8 MIAC (5th place) | 18-9 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Trevor Hall (G, Sr. | 2016 MIAC All-Conference, 2016 MIAC All-Defensive Team, 11.7 PPG, 5.2 RPG, .3.3 APG, 2.0 SPG, 487 FG%, .339 3PT%, .597 FT%)
- Bridgeport Tusler (G, Sr. | Two-time MIAC All-Conference, 13.3 PPG, 3.3 RPG, 2.3 APG, 2.3 SPG, .476 FG%, .366 3PT%, .652 FT%)
- Brycen Wojta (G, Sr. | Two-time MIAC All-Conference, 13.5 PPG, 2.9 RPG, 2.5 APG, 1.5 SPG, .435 FG%, .325 3PT%, .758 FT%)

### Did You Know?

- Last year's postseason appearance marked Bethel's 16th trip to the MIAC Playoffs in the last 18 seasons. Only two other teams across the conference have accomplished this feat during that time frame. BU has amassed a 4-3 postseason record under head coach Doug Novak.
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**CARLETON** | [Knights' men's basketball home page](#) |

### Head coach

- Guy Kalland (33rd season)

### A Year Ago

- 10-10 MIAC (seventh place) | 13-12 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Kevin Grow (F, Jr. | 2015-16 D3hoops.com All-West Region team; 2015-2016 All-MIAC and All-Defensive team; Averaged 14.0 points, 10.0 rebounds, 2.4 assists, and 2.3 blocks per game)
- Mitchell Biewen (G, Sr. | Averaged 11.8 points per game; shot .432 on three pointers last season, second among players with 130+ attempts)
- Peter Bakker-Arkema (G, Sr. | Averaged 6.2 points per game; second on the team with 39 made 3FG last season)

### Did You Know?

- Carleton was one of just 20 schools to have six or more student-athletes receive NABC Honors Court distinction.
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## CONCORDIA | [Cobbers' men's basketball home page](#) |

### Head coach

- Rich Glas (9th season)

### A Year Ago

- 13-7 MIAC (T3rd place) | 16-10 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Dylan Alderman (G, Sr. | Led the team in assists in 2015-16, third on the team in scoring (10.3 ppg))
- Zach Kinny (G, Sr. | fourth on the team in 3-pointers and fifth in assists in 2015-16)
- Austin Nelson (F, Sr. | Second on the team in 3-pointers & blocks in 2015-16; fourth on the team in scoring (9.8 ppg))

### Did You Know?

- Concordia had 10 players earn National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) Honors Court recognition for having at least a 3.20 grade point average last year which was the most by any team in the nation.
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## GUSTAVUS | [Gusties' men's basketball home page](#) |

### Head coach

- Mark Hanson (27th season)

### A Year Ago

- 9-11 MIAC (8th place) | 12-13 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Riley Sharbono (So., Wing | Led Gustie newcomers in scoring last season)
- Peter Kruize (Sr., Post | Appeared in 78 of 79 games over past three seasons)
- AJ Hatchett (Jr, Wing | Played in all 25 games last season)

### Did You Know?

- The Gusties travel to Las Vegas over winter break to take part in the Las Vegas Invite, taking on UW-Eau Claire and Ramapo College.
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## HAMLIN | [Pipers' men's basketball home page](#) |

### Head coach

- Jim Hayes (4th season)

### A Year Ago

- 2-18 MIAC (T-10th place) | 4-21 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Zach Smith (G, Jr. 14.0 PPG, 94 assists- 3<sup>rd</sup> in MIAC), HM in 2015-16, All-Rookie team in 14-15)
- Connor Knutson (F, So. 11.7 PPG, All-Freshman Team Selection in 15-16, 5 20+ point games)
- Isaac Brooks (F, So. 6.5 PPG, 2.3 RPG)

### Did You Know?

- When Hamline meets St. Olaf on Jan. 4, 2017, at Hutton Arena, it will be on the 80th anniversary of the first game ever played in the building. HU lost to Stanford, 58-26.
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## MACALESTER | [Scots' men's basketball home page](#) |



### Head coach

- Tim Whittle (8th season)

### A Year Ago

- 2-18 MIAC (T-10th place) | 4-21 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Kareem Ismail (C, Sr. | 2016 All-MIAC hon. mention, 14.4 ppg, 5.8 rpg, 985 career points)
- Dylan Kilgour (G, Sr. | 2014 All-MIAC hon. mention, injured in 2015-16, 990 career points)

- Michael Gutierrez (G, So. | MIAC All-Freshman Team, 13.6 ppg, 3.1 apg)

#### Did You Know?

- The Scots' 13 returning players accounted for 80.0 percent of their points scored last season.

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## SAINT JOHN'S | [Johnnies' men's basketball home page](#) |



#### Head Coach

- Pat McKenzie (Second season)

#### A Year Ago

- 13-7 MIAC (T-Third place) | 19-8 Overall

#### In the 2015-16 Postseason

- W, 99-86 vs. Augsburg (MIAC Quarterfinals); L, 80-91 at St. Olaf (MIAC Semifinals)

#### Players to Watch

- David Stokman (G, So. | Played all 27 varsity games with three starts as a freshman...led the Johnnies with a three-point percentage of .447 (34-76)...finished second on the team in free-throw percentage (.830)...finished fourth on the team with 41 assists...named to five-man MIAC All-Rookie team)
- Patrick Strom (W, Jr. | Played all 27 games with 25 starts...shot 41.8 percent from the field and 37.8 percent from the three-point line...grabbed a career-high six rebounds at Augsburg Feb. 20...made a career-high 7 of 13 three-point attempts vs. St. Scholastica Nov. 21...Academic All-MIAC)
- Tyler Weiss (P, Jr. | Started all 27 games for the Johnnies...shot 55.4 percent from the field...tied his career high with 18 points and grabbed a career-high 14 rebounds vs. St. Thomas Jan. 13...led SJU with 195 rebounds (7.2 rpg.) and 23 blocks...finished third on the team in free-throw percentage (.716)

#### Did You Know?

- SJU's season average of 78.5 points per game in 2015-16 tied the school record set in 1993-94.



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## SAINT MARY'S | [Cardinals' men's basketball home page](#) |

#### Head coach

- Jamison Rusthoven (4th season)

#### A Year Ago

- 7-13 MIAC (9th place) | 9-16 Overall

#### Players to Watch

- Wylie Ferron (Forward, Senior | 25 GP, 8.8 ppg, 5.6 rpg, 23 assists, 9 blocks, 10 steals ... 2015-16 H-M All-MIAC)
- Quashingm Smith-Pugh (Guard, Senior | 25 GP, 11.9 ppg, 3.9 rpg, 62 assists, 12 steals ... Team-leader in PPG and assists ... 2015-16 H-M All-MIAC)
- Aaron Romportl (Guard, Senior | 17 GP, 6.9 ppg, 2.1 rpg, 21 3-pointers, 28 assists, 2 blocks, 13 steals. ... .781 FT %)

#### Did You Know?

- The Cardinals closed out the season with nine wins—the most since the 2010-11 campaign, when Saint Mary's finished 9-16. The Saint Mary's seven conference wins, meanwhile, were the most since going 7-13 in 2009-10.



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## ST. OLAF | [Oles' men's basketball page](#) |

#### Head coach

- Dan Kosmoski (23rd season)

#### A Year Ago

- 14-6 MIAC (2nd place) | 19-10 Overall

#### In the 2015-16 Postseason

- Defeated Saint John's 91-80 in MIAC semifinals and St. Thomas 72-66 in MIAC title game... Advanced to second round of NCAA Championship with 80-78 win over North Central (Ill.)... Lost at St. Norbert, 63-61 in NCAA second round.

#### Players to Watch

- Austin Majeskie (F, Sr. | 8.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg as a junior... Had 19 points in NCAA 2nd round loss to SNC.)
- Robert Tobroxen (F, Jr. | 4.0 ppg, 2.9 rpg, seven starts as a sophomore.)

#### Did You Know?

- St. Olaf has reached the NCAA tournament for each of the last three seasons... In that span, the Oles are 30-8 at Skoglund Center.





**ST. THOMAS** | [Tommies' men's basketball home page](#) |

**Head coach**

- John Tauer (6th season)

**A Year Ago**

- 18-2 MIAC (1st place) | 30-3 Overall

**In the 2015-16 Postseason**

- NCAA champions (6-0), def. Benedictine (Ill.) 72-68 in title clash

**Players to Watch**

- Grant Shaeffer (G, Sr., | 14.6 ppg, 3.4 apg, 3.4 rpg, 51% FG, 43% 3FG, 73% FT, 61 consecutive starts, Career: 88 games, 904 points, 260 assists; in 6-0 NCAA playoff run last March, 18 ppg and 3.0 apg, 38 minutes, made 33 of 39 free throws;;
- Ryan Boll (F, Jr., | Started all 33 games on NCAA champion team and contributed 154 points (4.7 ppg) and 106 rebounds (3.3 rpg)
- Jordan Burich (C, Sr., | Career: 42 varsity games, 72 points, 56 rebounds)

**Did You Know?**

- Tommies graduated five of top seven players from NCAA title team, adding to the challenge as they attempt to extend their streak of MIAC championship to 12.

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