

2018-19 MIAC Men's Basketball Preview and Preseason Coaches' Poll

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BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – For the second year in a row, the Saint John's University men's basketball team has been picked to win the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC). Seven MIAC coaches gave SJU their top ranking in the annual Preseason Coaches' Poll, released on Thursday.

Saint John's won its eighth regular season title - and first since 2001 - last season. The nation's No. 25-ranked team advanced to the NCAA Division III Tournament for the first time in a decade and became just the sixth team with a 19-1 record or better in league play since the 1983-84 season. Last year's MIAC Sixth Man of the Year, **Jubie Alade** (Jr. | Plymouth, Minn. | Robbinsdale Armstrong) figures to play an expanded role for the Johnnies in 2018. Alade provided a spark off the bench all season long, averaging 11.0 points against Conference foes and double-digit point totals in 11 of the 18 MIAC games he suited up for as a sophomore.

St. Olaf earned 87 points and one first-place vote for second-place in the balloting. The Oles came in at No. 23 in D3hoops.com's Preseason Top 25 and are a likely contender for the MIAC crown once again after turning heads with a 20-8 record last season. It will not take long for St. Olaf to be challenged this season, though, with non-conference contests scheduled against No. 12 Wis.-Stevens Point on November 13 and No. 6 Whitworth three days later. Wins in those matchups would position the Oles as not just a team to beat in the MIAC, but nationwide as well. St. Olaf is one of just 15 Division III teams to qualify for the NCAA Tournament in at least four of the last five seasons.

Bethel garnered a pair of first-place votes to settle in at No. 3 in the Coaches' Poll with 83 total points. The Royals have reached the MIAC Playoff Championship in three of the last four seasons and are anticipated to be back in the mix once again this year. Second Team All-MIAC guard **Granger Kingland** (Jr. | Lake Mills, Iowa) played 32.8 minutes per game last season - second among MIAC competitors - and ranked fifth in the Conference with a career-high 389 points.

St. Thomas earned one first-place vote and 80 total points to rank fourth in the Preseason Coaches' Poll. The Tommies figure to return four starters from last year's 14-12 squad. National champions in 2011 and 2016, UST had won 12 consecutive MIAC titles from 2006-2017 before having their streak snapped last season. With a pair of All-First-Year selections returning in **Burt Hedstrom** (So. | Minnetonka, Minn.) and **Ryan Lindberg** (So. | Plymouth, Minn. | Wayzata), the Toms will look to start a new streak in 2018.

Augsburg received 61 points for fifth-place in the Coaches' Poll. The defending MIAC Playoff champion Auggies have the unenviable task of replacing last year's MIAC Player of the Year, Collin Olmscheid, who averaged 20-plus points per game as a senior last season. To soften the blow, Augsburg is set to return Second Team All-MIAC guard **Booker Coplin** (Shakopee, Minn.) and senior guard **Kevin McKiernan** (Savage, Minn. | Prior Lake), who drilled 7-of-9 from behind the arc in the MIAC Playoff Championship to help send the Auggies to the NCAA Tournament last season.

Carleton picked up 53 points in the preseason voting to lock down the No. 6 spot. The Knights are another traditionally strong program faced with replacing the production of an outstanding graduate, in this case, Kevin Grow. The All-American forward was the first MIAC player in six seasons to average a double-double for the year. Carleton will still have an experienced post presence this year, however, as junior **Kent Hanson** (St. Paul, Minn. | St. Paul Academy) registered in double figures 22 times last season, including a pair of 30-point efforts in addition to six more games with 20-plus points.

Gustavus is No. 7 in the Poll with 49 points. Third Team All-MIAC wing **Riley Sharbono** (Sr. | Marshall, Minn.) will enter the 2018-19 season just 87 points shy of 1,000 for his career. Sharbono was one of three Gusties to start all 25 games last season, averaging 14.5 points per contest on the year.

Hamline received 38 points in the balloting. Senior forward **Isaac Brooks** (Lakeville, Minn. | North) will enter his final year as a Piper already in midseason form, having represented the United States in the annual Division III tour of Brazil over the summer. Brooks averaged 13.2 points per game as a junior and is 242 points shy of 1,000 for his career.

At No. 9 in the Poll is Concordia with 27 points. **Collin Larson** (Sr. | Fargo, N.D. | Davies) led the Cobbers in scoring last season with an average of 11.6 points per contest. Larson scored in double-figures in 17 of the team's 25 games.



Macalester received 18 points in the Preseason Coaches' Poll. Two-time All-MIAC guard Abe Woldeslassie will take over as head coach of his alma mater in 2018. In 50 career games, Woldeslassie - who graduated from Macalester in 2008 - averaged 17.2 points and 5.4 assists per game while totaling 858 points. He has spent the past eight years as an assistant coach at the Division I and III levels.

Saint Mary's picked up 13 points in the preseason balloting and is also entering a new era with Joe Fano now at the helm for the Cardinals. Fano inherits a young team with just four upperclassmen (three juniors and one senior) on the 2018-19 roster. The Cardinals' youth do have plenty of experience, however, with rising sophomore guards **Kareem Anthony-Bello** (Chicago, Ill. | DePaul College Prep) and **Sawyer Rosner** (Phelps, Wis.) each averaging 10-plus points per game as freshmen last season.

Complete 2018-19 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.

2018-19 MIAC Men's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll

Rank	Institution (First-Place Votes)	Total
1.	Saint John's (7)	96
2.	St. Olaf (1)	87
3.	Bethel (2)	83
4.	St. Thomas (1)	80
5.	Augsburg	61
6.	Carleton	53
7.	Gustavus	49
8.	Hamline	38
9.	Concordia	27
10.	Macalester	18
11.	Saint Mary's	13

2019 MIAC Men's Basketball Playoffs

The 2019 MIAC Men's Basketball Playoffs will feature the top six teams in the Conference standings playing in a high-seed-host, single-elimination postseason tournament, and will be played in a Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday format moving forward. 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. 19, 2019. 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. 21. The Championship game is set for Saturday, Feb. 23, with the two semifinal winners meeting on the home court of the top remaining seed. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2019 NCAA Division III Men's Basketball Tournament.

Odds and Ends

-St. Thomas will take on Wis.-River Falls in the first-ever college basketball game played at U.S. Bank Stadium on Friday, November 30. The game will precede the Minnesota Gophers' non-conference game against Oklahoma State.

-Concordia's parquet floor in Memorial Auditorium was stripped, painted with a new design, and sealed as part of an update to the arena over the summer. Memorial Auditorium is home to Cobber basketball, volleyball, and wrestling.

-Six MIAC programs earned Team Academic Excellence Awards from the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) by recording cumulative grade point averages of 3.0 or better during the 2017-18 season. Among the institutions honored were **Augsburg University, Carleton College, Concordia College, Hamline University, Saint John's University,** and **Saint Mary's University.**