

2008 MIAC Men's Golf Championship Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. -- The 2008 MIAC Men's Golf Championship will be played this Saturday through Monday, October 4-6 at Bunker Hills Golf Course in Coon Rapids. Running in conjunction the MIAC Women's Championships, the 2008 Men's Championships will crown 73rd MIAC team champion. The conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Division III Championships, held in May 2009, will be awarded to the MIAC Champion.



The last 12 MIAC titles have either been won by Gustavus or Saint John's and those two teams will enter the 2008 Championships as the teams to beat. The Gusties grabbed the 2007 MIAC Championship, rallying from five strokes down on the third day to pass Saint John's. The Johnnies put together a strong run in the spring of 2008, to win their second consecutive NCAA Division III Championship. Saint John's was eight strokes out entering the final day of the championship, but managed to take home the title last May in Braselton, Ga.

If team scores from fall meets are an indicator of how the teams will fare at the 2008 Championships, it should be a competitive battle for the title. Saint John's, ranked #1 in the nation, leads the conference in scoring average, but #25 Bethel and Concordia have had strong fall seasons as well. #19 Gustavus, St. Thomas, Augsburg, and St. Olaf are close behind in their averages, but all four have had success in recent years at Bunker Hills. Macalester, Saint Mary's, and Carleton round out the field and all three have the potential to crack the top half of the conference standings.

Individually, Saint John's senior Joe Schoolmeesters will come into the Championships as the favorite. Schoolmeesters, the reigning MIAC Player of the Year, finished second at last season's MIAC Championships, sixth at the 2008 NCAA Championships, and first at the 2006 MIAC Championships. Schoolmeesters also has five other teammates who are in the top eight in the MIAC in scoring average, including senior Joe Daly who is second. Augsburg senior Tony Vanyo has come on strong this fall and is third in the MIAC in stroke average heading into the weekend. Other returning All-Conference golfers from 2007 include St. Thomas' Ben Jensen and Saint John's Joey Polingo.

[2008 MIAC Golf Championships Website](#)

Augsburg

Coach: Ted Vickerman (4th season)

2007 Finish: 8th (+91)

Augsburg Championship Preview

The Augsburg College men's golf team will aim to improve from last season's eighth-place MIAC championships finish, which broke a 13-year streak of top-five conference meet finishes. Entering this past weekend's Gustavus Twin Cities Classic, Augsburg had a team stroke average of 316.5 and a 32-19 record against foes in meet action.

Colby Anderson (SR, Luverne, Minn.), one of just two seniors on the Augsburg squad, has been the team's leader throughout the season, with a 77.7 stroke average and top-10 finishes in three of his four tournaments prior to the Twin Cities Classic. Tony Vanyo (JR, Circle Pines, Minn./Centennial HS) has shown promise in his first Auggie season, with a team-leading 75.8 stroke average.

There are several golfers vying for spots in the top-five in coach Ted Vickerman's Auggie lineup. Josh Henningson (SR, Monticello, Minn.) has averaged 81.0 during the fall season, as has newcomer Brian Deuel (FY, Vadnais Heights, Minn./White Bear Lake HS). Joel Kociemba (SO, Andover, Minn./St. Francis HS) has averaged 78.6 strokes this season, while Jason Henning (SO, Coon Rapids, Minn.), Matt Bendzick (FY, Chaska, Minn.) and Alex Umland (SO, Maple Grove, Minn./Totino-Grace HS) have also shown promise.

Bethel

Coach: Joel Johnson (2nd season)

2007 Finish: 9th (+99)

Bethel Championship Preview

Very little has changed in terms of personnel from the 2007 Bethel team. However, the most noticeable change in 2008 has been in terms of performance. The Royals have won both of their dual meets and have finished in either first or second place at their tournament appearances thus far, giving them confidence heading into this season's MIAC championship. Tony Weber has anchored the team with consistent play, scoring between 72 and 80 each round for a season average of 75. Weber's play has been closely followed by that of Bjorn Hanson, who has four top-10 finishes in Bethel's five events. Mason Swenson has also been an impact player for the Royals in just his first year on the team. He shot a 69 in the first round of the Augsburg Invitational at the Oakdale Golf Club which helped him go on to be the tournament medalist with a 146, and was subsequently named the MIAC Men's Golf Athlete of the Week. Bethel went on to win the Augsburg Invitational, making it the first time in more than 10 years that the Royals have won a tournament of it's size. The team's performance in the Saint John's Invitational the following weekend gave reason for cheer as well. The Royals finished the rain-shortened tournament in second place out of a field of 19 teams that included two-time defending national champions, Saint John's.

Head Coach Joel Johnson has been pleased with his team's results and is looking forward to surprising the competition after last year's 10th place finish in the MIAC Championship. "All I ask of our guys is to stay within themselves and play smart golf. When we do that, we give ourselves a chance to do well. I'm happy with the way we've scored against some of the best teams in the region and also how we've done under some unfavorable weather conditions. If we play like we have and like I know we can, I think we'll turn some heads this year."

Carleton

Coach: Jerry Ericksen (2nd season)

2007 Finish: 10th (+112)

Carleton Championship Preview

The Knights are one of the most inexperienced teams in the MIAC. Five of the nine golfers on the roster had never played in a collegiate meet at the beginning of the season. This led head coach Jerry Ericksen to juggle his line-up in each meet in the hopes of finding the best combination of newcomers and veterans. The Knights have also missed last year's All-MIAC performer Alec Roman (Jr./Portland, Ore./Catlin Gabel School), who is studying abroad this year.

Without Roman, the Knights have been lead by junior Trent Wells (Rochester, Minn./ Century). At the season opening Augsburg Invitational, Wells shot 18-over par for a total of 161. He finished in eighth place at the St. Olaf Invitational with a 36-hole score of 157. On the first day of competition, Wells shot a 76, which was a career low and put him in second place. Last year, Wells finished 38th at the MIAC Championship.

Two of the new Knights have been consistent performers for coach Ericksen. Freshman David Steefel-Moore (Plymouth, Minn./ Wayzata) has an average of 81. He started off his career with a 75 on the first day at the Augsburg Invitational on his way to a 157 and a tie for 23rd. Fellow freshman Brian Gilmore (Edina, Minn.) has been extremely steady this fall. His average is 83 and all of his rounds have been in-between 81 and 85.

Lone senior Hal Baseman (Chevy Chase, Md./ Bethesda-Chevy Chase) offers the Knights an experienced option for their final spots, while freshman Turner Wadington (St. Charles, Ill./ Elgin Academy) and sophomore David Sacks (New York, Collegiate School) are intriguing prospects that is also in the hunt for the last two spots.

Concordia

Coach: Duane Siverson (1st season)

2007 Finish: Tied 5th (+60)

Concordia Championship Preview

The 2008 MIAC Men's Golf Championship will be a proving ground for Concordia as they are one of the youngest teams in the tournament. Four of the team's top five golfers are either freshmen or sophomores and three of those are first-year players participating in their initial conference championship tournament.

The Cobbers' top golfer throughout the fall season has been sophomore Zach Kappes (Moorhead, Minn.). Kappes has the best 18-hole average on the team and has been the low scorer in three of Concordia's five meets so far this season. He has a 76.0 strokes per round average and has one round of par or better on the year.

After Kappes, the Cobbers will rely on a group of freshman and possibly the lone senior on the team. First-year golfer Tyler Champ (Champlin, Minn./Meadow Creek Christian HS) owns the second best average on the team. He is averaging 77.3 strokes per round and has the low round of any CC golfer this year. Champ fired a 70 in the second round at the Erv Kaiser Invite hosted by NDSU. Senior Erik Weiss (Moorhead, Minn.) is right behind Champ with a 77.4 average. His low round came in the very first meet of the year when he shot a 73 at the Jimmie Open.

A quartet of players follow the top three for Concordia. Freshmen Taylor Henrickson (Barnesville, Minn.) and Cory Samson (West Fargo, N.D./Oak Grove HS) and Jacob Johnson (So., Rosemount, Minn.) and Jake Moen (Sr., Morris, Minn.) have all spent time with the No.1 team for Concordia. Henrickson and Moen are the only two of the four that has an average below 80 for the year. Henrickson has a 78.2 average in his six rounds and Moen owns a 79.4 average in his seven rounds.

If the young Cobbers can put together three consistent rounds then they should be able to crack into the top five of the conference and make a run into the top three.

For complete Cobber men's golf info: www.cord.edu/dept/sports/fall/mg/index.php

Gustavus

Coach: Scott Moe (12th season)

2007 Finish: 1st (+16)

Gustavus Championship Preview

The Gustavus men's golf team will look to defend its conference title in 2008, however Coach Scott Moe is working with a lot of new faces after the loss of all five players from last year's championship squad. Junior Rickey Copeland (Mahtomedi, Minn.) has led the way for the Gusties this fall with a stroke average of 75.4. He has been the squad's top finisher in each of its three tournaments.

Copeland will be joined on the MIAC Championships roster by junior Josh Curb (Bemidji, Minn.), junior A. J. Olson (White Bear Lake, Minn.), and first year players John Anderson (Appleton, Wis.) and Tony Meierhofer (Ham Lake, Minn.). Curb, who is averaging 77.8 strokes per round, has registered one top-five and one top-ten finish in the team's first three tournaments. A. J. Olson, who is averaging 78.8 strokes per round, has recorded the team's lowest round of the fall, a 69, in the first round of the Augsburg Invitational. The newcomers, Anderson and Meierhofer have been welcome additions for Coach Moe. Anderson is averaging 79.4 strokes per round, while Meierhofer is at 83.8 strokes per round.

The Gusties, who are rated #18 in the most recent Golf Coaches Association of America Division III poll, currently rank fourth in MIAC Team Scoring Average at 313.1 strokes per round.

Macalester

Coach: Martha Nause (9th season)

2007 Finish: 7th (+76)

Macalester Championship Preview

Macalester's lineup has been well balanced all season, with four different players providing low team score in the squad's four tournaments this fall, and this parity is Macalester's No. 1 strength heading into the '08 MIAC championships.

Ben Langworthy (So., Tucson, Ariz. / Tucson Magnet School) placed fifth out of 91 golfers at the Augsburg Invitational in Hutchinson with a two-round 150 and owns Macalester's low average on the fall campaign at 78.5. Ryan Peters (Jr., Kohler, Wis.) took eighth out of over 100 players at the St. John's Invitational with a 75, while Langworthy placed 19th in this tourney. Daniel Kerwin (Jr., Colorado Springs, Colo. / Yokahama International) was Macalester's top performer at the St. Olaf Invitational when he placed eighth with a 157 tally. Nick Santrach (So., Coon Rapids, Minn.) has been solid all fall and is second on the team with an 81.3 average.

The Scots are looking to improve upon last year's seventh-place MIAC finish. Macalester is averaging a 322.5 team score going into the Twin Cities Classic.

Saint John's

Coach: Bob Alpers (16th season)

2007 Finish: 2nd (+28)

Saint John's Championship Preview

Can three "Regular Joes" lead the Saint John's University golf team to a three-peat?

For the first time in school history, a Saint John's varsity sport team will begin its season as a two-time defending national champion when the Johnnies hit the links this fall.

Three members of last spring's national championship team return for 2008-09: seniors Joe Daly (Owatonna, Minn.), Joey Polingo (Litchfield, Minn.) and Joe Schoolmeesters (Litchfield, Minn.). The 2007 and 2008 MIAC Player of the Year, Schoolmeesters earned 2008 All-America first team honors with a sixth-place finish at the NCAA Division III Championship in May. A three-time Golf Coaches Association of America (GCAA) All-District selection and the 2006 MIAC Co-Freshman of the Year, Schoolmeesters led the MIAC with a 72.8 stroke average in 25 rounds of play in 2007-08. Schoolmeesters, who earned medalist honors five times last season, was named to the 2008 All-Nicklaus Team, which honored a total of 20 student-athletes from Division I, II, III and the NAIA.

Both Daly and Polingo earned All-America third team honors with an 18th-place finish at the national championship. A 2008 All-District selection and All-American Scholar, Daly earned co-medalist honors at the Saint John's Spring Invitational and finished tied for second at both the Augsburg Invitational and the Twin Cities Classic last fall. Polingo collected five birdies to record a 31 on the final nine holes to finish with a two-under par 69 to spark the Johnnies' comeback in the final round of the championship.

The defending national champions need to replace Matt Bohlig and Clinton Dammann, who both graduated last spring. Bohlig posted a 74.2 stroke average last season and earned All-America second team honors with a 10th-place finish at the NCAA Championship. A two-time All-District selection, Bohlig claimed medalist honors at Gustavus' Bobby Krig Invitational and tied for second at the Twin Cities Classic. Bohlig ended his career fourth in school history with a 75.1 stroke average in 46 career rounds.

Dammann was the 2007 *Callaway Golf* Arnold Palmer Award recipient as medalist and first-team All-American at the 2007 NCAA Division III Championship. Dammann ended his career with a 76.8 stroke average in 89 rounds.

Senior Jeff Nechas (Otsego, Minn./Wayzata), senior Alex Wieme (Sartell, Minn./Sartell-St. Stephen) and junior Ben Vangsness (Alexandria, Minn.), as well as a talented crop of incoming freshmen will compete for spots on this season's varsity squad. Nechas finished third out of 80 golfers at Gustavus' Bobby Krig Invitational and posted a 76.1 stroke average in 11 rounds. Wieme and Vangsness recorded scoring averages of 78.8 and 79.4 last season, respectively.

The 2007 *Eaton Golf Pride* National Coach of the Year, Bob Alpers begins his 16th season as head golf coach at Saint John's in 2008-09. Alpers has guided the Johnnies to six MIAC titles and nine consecutive NCAA appearances during his tenure. A three-time Regional Coach of the Year, including 2008, Alpers has won MIAC Coach of the Year honors six times in his coaching career (1999, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2006 and 2007).

Saint Mary's

Coach: Jeff Stangl (1st season)

2007 Finish: Tied 5th (+60)

Saint Mary's Championship Preview

When Jeff Stangl was named the new head coach of the Saint Mary's University men's and women's golf teams, he joked that he is the only coach on the Cardinals staff who is looking for sub-par performances from his teams.

And if the Cardinals are going to make any type of move up the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference ladder, rounds of par or better will have to be a more common appearance.

Stangl inherits a men's squad that posted a fifth-place finish in last year's season-ending conference championships — the team's highest showing in more than a decade.

Unfortunately, Stangl also inherits a men's team that is without two-time all-conference performer Jesse Polk — who carded the team's lone under-par round (a three-under 69 vs. Macalester) and accounted for 12 of the team's 22 rounds in the 70s.

"When I took over (for the late Tom Farren) as the men's golf coach, the first thing I did was look back at the last four years and try to assess what it was that made this program tick," explained Stangl. "And over the last four years, Jesse Polk was that mainstay — that on-the-course leader that Coach Farren could always count on to put together a solid round.

"So when we had our beginning of the year meeting, I challenged the returners: 'Who was going to step up and fill Jesse's shoes — who was going to be that No. 1 guy that I could count on meet-in and meet-out.'"

Enter Tony Hynes (Lino Lakes, Minn.)

Hynes has been the Cardinals' leader all fall, entering the conference championship having posted every round in the 70s. If the Cardinals are going to make that move at the conference championships, however, Hynes isn't going to be able to do it alone.

Stangl admits that replacing Polk is not going to be an easy task — but he does have plenty of candidates who have the ability to put together consistent rounds in the 70s.

"We have a number of returners who have proven in the past that they are capable of giving us the types of scores we are going to need in order to be competitive (in the MIAC)," said Stangl. "Now it's just a matter of going out there and doing it on a daily basis."

St. Olaf

Coach: Glen Peterson (3rd season)

2007 Finish: 4th (+50)

St. Olaf Championship Preview

St. Olaf will look to improve on their fourth place MIAC Championship in finish in 2007, returning four golfers from last year's tournament.

St. Olaf is led by Mack Traynor, who has averaged 78.3 strokes in seven rounds this fall. Traynor, a senior, has been in the top ten in three of five events this fall. Sophomore Chris Conklin is another Ole to watch, averaging 79.5 strokes in four events, while teammate Bror Herrick has averaged 79.9 strokes for two top-five finishes, including his first individual win at the St. Olaf Invite on Sept. 21.

The team has averaged at 315 strokes this season, garnering team titles at the Ole/Auggie Shootout and Windsong Farm Invite. The Oles were also second at the nine-team St. Olaf Invite, held at the Summit in Cannon Falls.

St. Thomas

Coach: Dave Lepp (3rd season)

2007 Finish: 3rd (+47)

St. Thomas Championship Preview

St. Thomas placed third in last year's MIAC Championship meet and will try to post the school's 11th top-four team placing in 12 seasons.

This fall, the Tommies have placed fourth, 10th and seventh in multi-team fields in their first three fall tournaments.

Senior Ben Jensen placed third in the 2007 conference meet as a junior. In five fall rounds, Jensen is averaging 76.6.

Grant Shafranski made the NCAA Division III All-Freshman team in 2007-08. In five fall rounds, Shafranski is averaging 78.2. He played in 11 tournaments (22 rounds) for the Tommies in 2007-08 and finished the year with a 79.1 scoring average, including a 76.3 average in the spring. Shafranski finished tied for 27th at the MIAC Championships last October.

Freshman John Baggenstoss is averaging 79.4 for five rounds. Sophomore Sean Barrett was a football placekicker last fall but played well in golf last spring season.

Other freshmen pushing for top-five spots for the Tommies include Delaney Metcalf of Hill-Murray, Zach Barnum of Orono, Brandon Engebos of DePere, Wis., and Alex Grausnick of Totino-Grace.