

# 2007-08 MIAC Men's Hockey Season Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. -- While nationally-ranked Bethel and St. Thomas are the top preseason picks in the coaches' poll, the battle for the 2007 MIAC Men's Hockey title should come down to the final weekends of conference action.

Gustavus, Saint John's, and St. Olaf all will have teams with the ability to compete for the top spot in the conference. The quest for the five MIAC Playoff spots should be just as competitive as Augsburg, Saint Mary's, Hamline, and Concordia all have the talent to be playoff teams.

The team that can make it through the conference season, finish in the top five, and win the conference playoffs will earn the MIAC's automatic bid in the NCAA Tournament.

**MIAC Preseason Coaches Poll:** 1. Bethel, 2. St. Thomas, 3. Gustavus, 4. (tie) Saint John's, 4. (tie) St. Olaf, 6. Augsburg, 7. Saint Mary's, 8. Hamline, 9. Concordia.

**2007-08 MIAC Playoff Dates:** First Round (Thursday, February 28), Semifinals (Saturday, March 1), Finals (Wednesday, March 5).

## Augsburg

**Coach:** Chris Brown

**Career Record:** 12-10-4 (2nd season at Augsburg)

**2006-07 Finish:** 3rd (9-3-4 MIAC, 12-10-4 overall)

Augsburg Players to Watch
<b>Dan Leopold</b> (D, Sr., Afton, Minn./Stillwater HS)
<b>Andy Kent</b> (G, Jr., Lakeville, Minn.) All-MIAC selection in 2006-07.
<b>Chris Johnson</b> (F, So., Verona, Wis./Madison Memorial) 2006-07 All-MIAC honorable-mention and All-Rookie Team
<b>Brett Way</b> (F, Jr., Grand Ledge, Mich.)
<b>Danny Carlson</b> (F, Sr., Roseville, Minn.) All-MIAC honorable-mention in 2004-05.
<b>Ben Bradbury</b> (D, Jr., Winnipeg, Manitoba/Vincent Massey Collegiate)

Augsburg Season Preview

There will be plenty of new faces on the goal-scoring sheets for the Augsburg College men's hockey team in the 2007-08 season, after much of the scoring punch for the past several seasons was lost to graduation.

But a young but talented offensive group, a solid defensive corps, and the return of All-MIAC goalie Andy Kent (Jr., Lakeville, Minn.) means that all is not lost for the Auggies, who finished 12-10-4 under MIAC Coach of the Year Chris Brown.

Kent posted a 2.70 goals-against-average last season, second-best among MIAC goalies in overall play, while his .898 save percentage and his 10-8-4 record were both fourth-best. Kent helped to propel the Auggies through a 7-1 end-of-season surge that put the Auggies into the MIAC postseason playoffs for the first time since the 2002-03 season.

Four key players return to the Auggie defense in junior Ben Bradbury (Jr., Winnipeg, Manitoba/Vincent Massey Collegiate HS), Dan Leopold (Sr., Afton, Minn./Stillwater HS), Patrick Fogerty (Sr., Forest Lake, Minn.) and Chris Kopelke (So., Shoreview, Minn./Mounds View HS).

Up front, Chris Johnson (So., Verona, Wis./Madison Memorial HS) scored eight goals with 11 assists last season to earn All-MIAC honorable-mention and MIAC All-Rookie Team honors. Veterans Brett Way (Jr., Grand Ledge, Mich.), Danny Carlson (Sr., Roseville, Minn.), Kellen Chamblee (Jr., Falcon Heights, Minn./Roseville HS) and Tim Lawson (Sr., Monument, Colo./Lewis-Palmer HS) also return.

Several talented rookies will be expected to make an immediate impact for the Auggies this season, including defender Ben Roberts (Fr., Bloomington, Minn./Jefferson HS) and forwards Joel Sauer (Fr., Madison, Wis./Memorial HS) and Jim Jensen (Fr., Plymouth, Minn.).

## **Bethel**

**Coach:** Joel Johnson

**Career Record:** 0-0-0 (1st season)

**2006-07 Finish:** 1st (12-3-1 MIAC, 18-10-1 overall)

### **Bethel Players to Watch**

**Steve Eastman** (Sr., Defense, 5-11, 175, Edina, Minn.)

**Jeff Balvin** (Sr., Forward, 6-0, 185, Maple Grove, Minn.)

**Kent Bostrom** (Jr., 5-11, 180, Vadnais Heights, Minn.)

**Ian Vanbiesbrouck** (Fr., Forward, 5-10, 175, Detroit, Mich.)

**Lukas Jorgensen** (Fr., Forward, 5-10, 180, Little Falls, Minn.)

**Christian Fogerty** (Fr., Forward, 6-0, 185, Forest Lake, Minn.)

### **Bethel Season Preview**

The bar is set high for the men’s hockey team going into the 2007-08 season. A record breaking performance last season ended with Bethel earning its first MIAC regular season championship along with the MIAC playoff title. After sweeping the league championships for the first time in school history, Bethel then went on to its first ever NCAA national tournament appearance. A first round victory over UW River Falls led to a NCAA quarterfinal game where the Royals lost to eventual Final Four participant St. Norbert’s.

Coach Joel Johnson is entering his first season as head coach after serving as the assistant for the past 3 seasons. Peter Aus, a recent inductee into the MN Hockey Coaches Association Hall of Fame, retired after 13 successful seasons, leading Bethel to the top of the MIAC conference.

Though expectations are high for this year, there are also some big skates to fill as the Royals lost 12 players from last year’s veteran team including All-MIAC defenseman Neal Carlson and forwards Nick Miler, Ryan Adams, Benoit Duhamel, and Jon Kramer, who combined for 33 goals and 84 total points last season.

Leading Bethel into this year will be sophomore goaltender Aaron Damjanovich (Remer, MN), who was an All-MIAC player a year ago. The Royals also bring back 5 of 6 defenseman led by Steve Eastman (Sr., Edina, MN) and Bill Menozzi (Sr., Lakeville, MN). Up front, the Royals will rely on seniors Dan Bonne (White Bear Lake, MN) and Jeff Balvin (Maple Grove, MN), as well as juniors Brad Peterson (Bloomington, MN), and Kent Bostrom (Vadnais Heights, MN) to spark the offense.

**Concordia**

**Coach:** Steve Baumgartner  
**Career Record:** 220-290-33 (22nd season)

**2006-07 Finish:** Tied 8th (3-13-0 MIAC, 7-18-0 overall)

**Concordia Players to Watch**

**Alec Holen** (Jr., C, Thief River Falls, Minn.) 2006-07 MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention

**Ryan Clukey** (Jr., F, Moorhead, Minn.)

**Concordia Season Preview**

The 2007-08 Concordia men's hockey preview can be summed up in one word – goaltending.

The fortunes of the Cobbers will once again ride on finding a goalie that can be consistent throughout the entire season, especially in conference games. Last year CC was eighth in the league in goals allowed during MIAC play, allowing an average of 4.75 goals per game in their 16 league games. The team allowed at least four goals in 16 of their 25 games last year. Not surprisingly, Concordia stumbled to a 1-15 record in those 16 games.

The top goalie for the Cobbers in 2006-07, Mike Persson (Regina, Sask.) had a 4.34 goals against average in conference games. Of the five teams that made the playoffs last year, all five had at least one goalie with a GAA under 3.05. If Concordia is going to climb out of the cellar in 2007-08, they will need one of their four goalies on the roster to step up and consistently keep the team in the game.

The winds of change might be blowing in favor of the Cobbers in 2007-08 as 22<sup>nd</sup>-year head coach Steve Baumgartner has brought in 12 newcomers to shore up the roster. Of those 12, six are defensemen that will help lower the Cobbers' goals against average and give the team a more physical presence in front of their own net.

A trio of defensemen will return to help the six newcomers get acquainted with the speed of the college game. Alternate captain Kirby Markowsky (Sr., Warkaw, Sask.) is the top physical presence on the blue line. His 6-4, 215 frame has helped him deal with the biggest forwards in the league and will help toughen up his teammates in practice. Markowsky is joined by the Babich boys. Both Chris and Carl Babich (Jr., Eveleth, Minn.) are two-year starters that will add necessary experience to the younger defense corps. Both players are solid two-way defensemen that can jump into the attack and provide scoring punch.

The best news for the Cobbers will be the depth on offense. Concordia returns five of their top seven scorers from last year when the team scored at least six goals on four occasions and scored an average of 5.14 goals in their seven wins.

Leading the way will be Alec Holen (Jr., Thief River Falls, Minn.) who was named to the MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention Team in 2006-07 and led the team in scoring with 13 goals and 13 assists for 26 points. Linemate Ryan Clukey (Moorhead, Minn.) was second on the team in scoring with 23 points and led the team in assists. The third member of the team's top line also returns. Captain Cory Johnson (Moorhead, Minn.) was sixth on the team with 15 points and will help Holen and Clukey to improve once he joins the team after his stint with the Concordia football team.

Sophomore Knut Bitustoeyl (Asker, Norway) had many outstanding highlights in 2006-07 and finished fourth on the team in scoring with 19 points. He led the team in power play goals with six. The other returning player that tallied more than 10 points on the season is sophomore Blaine Gamst (Willow River, Minn.). Gamst had five goals and eight assists for 13 points.

Saving the most critical for last, the returning Cobber netminding crew of Persson, Jeremy Boniface (Jr., Goderich, Ont.) and Josh Hand (Sr., Temple, Pa.) have all shown flashes of being top-flight college goalies but have also gone through moments of being unable to stop shots from anywhere on the rink. Boniface brings the most experience from last season. He appeared in 20 games and finished with a GAA of 4.33. He also posted the team's only two shutouts of the year and had a team-high five wins. Persson had an overall goals against average of 4.04 but was slowed by an injury in the first game after the Christmas break. A healthy person will help push both Boniface and Hand in practice and keep the trio sharp throughout the season.

The early part of the schedule will not be kind to Concordia. The Cobbers open up the year on the road at NCHA powers UW-Eau Claire and UW-Stevens Point. They return home to face Lake Forest in the home opener on Nov. 9 and will then square off against St. Norbert one night later. St. Norbert tied for the NCHA title last year and advanced to the NCAA Tournament semifinals. CC will open the MIAC slate on Nov. 30 when they play at Hamline at 7 p.m.

## **Gustavus**

**Coach:** Brett Peterson

**Career Record:** 81-86-15 (8th season)

**2006-07 Finish:** 5th (9-6-1 MIAC, 11-13-2 overall)

## **Gustavus Players to Watch**

**Eric Bigham** (So., RF, Robbinsdale, Minn.) All-Conference, MIAC All-Rookie Team

**Ben Ollila** (Sr., RF, Lino Lakes, Minn) Honorable Mention All-Conference, Captain

**Tim Ornell** (Sr., LF, Lino Lakes, Minn.) Captain

**Gustavus Season Preview**

The Gustavus men’s hockey team will mix a quality group of returning letterwinners with a large group of transfers and first year players in hopes of qualifying for the MIAC Post-Season Tournament for the eighth straight year. Coach Brett Petersen will look to senior captains Ben Ollila and Tim Ornell and sophomore all-conference forward Eric Bigham to lead the squad. The biggest issue facing the team will be to find a player or combination of players to fill the goaltending position as none of the three goaltenders on the roster were on the squad last season.

Eric Bigham made an immediate impact last year as the Robbinsdale, Minn. native led the team in scoring with 11 goals and 16 assists for 27 points. He was one of only two freshmen named to the 2006-07 All-Conference Team. Senior captains Ben Ollila and Tim Ornell will join Bigham up front. The two Lino Lakes, Minn. natives finished fifth and sixth, respectively on the Gustie scoring list last season. Ollila tallied 8 goals and 13 assists for 21 points, while Ornell contributed 10 goals and 7 assists for 17 points.

Defense will be a question for the Gusties, especially goaltending where Coach Petersen will give three goaltenders the opportunity to fill the opening in the nets. All three are first year members of the Gustavus hockey team. The group includes freshmen Nick Kellogg (Andover, Minn.) and Josh Swartout (St. Louis Park, Minn.) and junior transfer Matthew Lopes (East Falmouth, Mass./Univ. of Mass. at Boston). The Gusties do return four defensemen who played regularly a year ago to help with the inexperience in the nets. That group includes senior Niko Suoraniemi (Angelholm, Sweden), and sophomores Tony Palma (Lino Lakes, Minn.), Spencer Campion (Plymouth, Minn.), and Cody Mosbeck (Emo, Ontario).

**Hamline**

**Coach:** Scott Bell

**Career Record:** 11-34-3 (3rd season)

**2006-07 Finish:** Tied 8th (3-13-0 MIAC, 7-18-0 overall)

**Hamline Players to Watch**

**Andrew Birkholz** (Jr., F, Maple Grove, Minn./Breck)

**Steve Festler** (Jr., F, Little Falls, Minn./Little Falls)

**Joe Long** (Jr., D, Dayton, Minn./Elk River)

**Dustin Fulton** (Jr., F, Brooklyn Park, Minn./Breck)

**Cory Krogen** (So., D, Marshall, Minn./Marshall)

**Hamline Season Preview**

Head coach Scott Bell's 2007-08 roster lacks losses to graduation from last year's edition and there still isn't a senior on the list. However, as he enters his third season with the Pipers, Bell will finally see leadership coming from upperclassmen with a strong junior class taking to the ice.

"This is our first year with a junior class, so it will be nice to have leadership coming from players with more experience," said Bell. The Pipers return two first-team All-MIAC selections (one forward and one defenseman) as well as an All-Rookie team member from the 2006-07 season.

The Pipers top line will be led by junior forward Dustin Fulton (Brooklyn Park, Minn.), one of the Pipers two captains. His line will include classmates Steve Festler (Little Falls, Minn.) and Andrew Birkholz (Maple Grove, Minn.). Fulton earned first team All-MIAC honors for the second time last season, scoring eight goals and nine assists in conference play, but had 13 goals and 21 assists over the course of the season. Festler was the team's second leading scorer during the 2006-07 season with 14 goals and 11 assists. Birkholz, a smart and smooth skater, tallied three goals and five assists last season while only playing 10 games.

Offensively, Bell hopes to see early production from key first-years Kyle Mattson (Maple Grove, Minn.), Austin Tavis (Grand Rapids, Minn.) and Nick Zilka (Mound, Minn.). Mattson, who most recently played with Wichita Falls of the North American Hockey League where he scored 15 points last winter, is the all-time leading scorer at Maple Grove High School. Another product of the NAHL, Tavis is an extremely hard worker on the ice whose ability should be seen in the line-up immediately.

Zilka's savvy and skill on the ice means that Bell will look to him for immediate contribution on the ice. While playing for the Soo Indians of the Northern Ontario Hockey League last winter, Zilka was the second-leading scorer on the team with 18 goals and 22 assists.

Hamline's other first team All-MIAC selection last season went to junior defender Joe Long (Dayton, Minn.), who also received honorable mention All-MIAC honors in his first year and will serve alongside Fulton as captain. Long played just nine games as a defenseman last season, but will be make the full-time transition to defense this year. The third leading scorer for the Pipers in 2006-07, Long had 13 goals and 10 assists.

One of the biggest improvements on the ice for the Pipers should come in the area of defense and special teams play. Defender Jared Hummel (Eagan, Minn.) is another first-year who will see significant playing time in both power play and penalty kill situations. Hummel's partner at the blue line will be sophomore Cory Krogen (Marshall, Minn.), who was named to the 2006-07 MIAC All-Rookie team after putting up seven assists in 16 conference games and tallying 1 goal and 12 assists during the season. Bell is looking for Krogen to take a leap forward with his strong skating to take a leadership role on defense and help solidify the Pipers' defensive play.

A sophomore transfer from the University of Connecticut, Chris Johnson (Brooklyn Park, Minn.) should be one of Bell's top four defensemen as the season gets underway. A solid, tough player, he should be the final difference-maker to help the Pipers lower the shot attempts at their goalies from the 886 allowed last season.

Bell is looking for a calming influence in net, and hopes to get that, as well as steady play, out of first-year goalie Kyle Russell (Toronto, Ontario). Russell played the last two seasons with the Markham Waxers of the Ontario Provincial Junior A Hockey League, where he played more than 3,000 minutes in goal during his career, posting a 32-16 record in goal.

The Pipers also return sophomore goalie Matt Wanvig (Brooklyn Park, Minn.), who started 22 games in net last season and was in goal for all seven of the Pipers victories.

Another significant improvement to the Pipers this year has come in the coaching staff, as Bell added two on-ice assistant coaches in Chris Lonke and Andy Disch, something that the Piper players had not seen in practice the previous two seasons.

With more members of the 2007-08 Hamline team having experience with the high level of competition that the MIAC brings to the ice coupled with highly skilled newcomers, look for the Pipers to be more effective and efficient in transition and in special teams play, improving upon their record from 2006-07.

**Coach:** John Harrington

**Career Record:** 228-130-29 (15th season)

**2006-07 Finish:** 6th (6-9-1 MIAC, 9-14-2 overall)

#### Saint John's Players to Watch

- **Jake Hipp (Jr., F, Bismarck, N.D.)**

**Tom Freeman (Sr., F, Eagan, Minn.)**

**Pat Eagles (Sr., F, Falcon Heights, Minn.) 2007-08 team captain.**

**Pat Connelly (Jr., F, Birchwood, Minn.)**

**Vince Wheeler (Jr., G, Clearwater, Minn.)**

#### Saint John's Season Preview

The 2007-08 Saint John's University hockey team is looking to rebound from a frustrating season and return to the high level of hockey it is known for.

The Johnnies finished sixth in the MIAC with a 6-9-1 record, failing to make the MIAC Playoffs for the first time in 11 years. Overall, the Johnnies were 9-14-2 last season.

The Johnnies will look to senior forward and captain Pat Eagles (Falcon Heights, Minn./Roseville Area) to help turn the teams' fortunes around. Eagles scored four goals and 10 assists while posting a +1 plus/minus ratio. The Johnnies will also lean on senior assistant captain Tom Freeman (Eagan, Minn./Eagan), a forward who posted 14 points (6g/8a) last year. Junior forward Jake Hipp (Bismarck, N.D./Shattuck-St. Mary's) should also be an impact player following a 14-point season (7g/7a).

Other key returnees include Pat Connelly (Birchwood, Minn./White Bear Lake), a junior who tied for a team- leading nine goals last season, and assistant captain and senior defenseman Nate Meinz (St. Cloud, Minn./Tech), who will anchor the blue line for the Johnnies this season.

Junior goaltender Vince Wheeler (Clearwater, Minn./St. Cloud Tech) is back in the net as the Johnnies' main goaltender after posting a 7-10-2 record with a 2.89 GAA and a .890 save percentage last season.

"We played great defense and Wheeler had a good year, but we just need to find ways to score more goals," said SJU head coach John Harrington. "Some of our returnees didn't play as well as previous years, and I think they can come back strong."

The Johnnies lost only six players from last year's roster and will return 17 varsity players. "We were a very young team last year, so hopefully we can build on experience," Harrington said.

Harrington will have to replace his top scorers whom he lost to graduation. Graduated players include forward Justin Wild, who led the team with 18 points (9g /9a), and Blake Williams, who led the team with 12 assists and added 3 goals. The loss of players also affected the defense. The Johnnies lost defensemen Matt Wocken and Tom Hartman, who led the team with a plus/minus of +6. Hartman was named to the *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-America College Division At-Large second team last year.

Harrington will look toward last season's underclassmen to use their experience to make plays on the ice. That group of young talent includes junior forward Joel Stacklie (Ham Lake, Minn./Blaine) and junior defenseman Clayton Rehm (Park Rapids, Minn./Billings West, Mont.). Stacklie appeared in 19 games and tallied 8 points (5g/3a), while Rehm played in 18 games and accumulated 7 assists from the blue line.

Two sophomores, Karl Gilbert (Hermantown, Minn./Hermantown) and Gabriel Harren (Warroad, Minn./Warroad), played well last season. Gilbert played in 13 games and scored five points, while Harren played in 15 games and tallied four points.

Harrington will add the top four scorers from last year's junior varsity team (12-3-3 record) to this season's varsity roster. Sophomore forward Jeremy Streit (Sauk Rapids, Minn./Sauk Rapids-Rice) posted 32 points (9g/23a) on the JV squad and was the team's points leader. Sophomore forward Jake Koehler (Ramsey, Minn./Elk River) led the junior varsity with 20 goals in 18 games and finished with a season total of 30 points (20g/10a). Other additions to the varsity roster include junior forward Jason Johannes (Eagan, Minn./Eagan) with 26 points (10g/16a) and sophomore forward Dylan Decker (Park City, Utah/Shattuck-St. Mary's) with 21 points (8g/13a).

The Johnnies open their 2007-08 season on Nov. 2 at Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The Johnnies play 12 home games at the National Hockey Center in St. Cloud, including the home-opener against Lake Forest, Ill. at 2 p.m. on Nov. 10.

## **Saint Mary's**

**Coach:** Don Olson

**Career Record:** 368-385-39 (30th season)

**2006-07 Finish:** 7th (4-11-1 MIAC, 7-17-1 overall)

### **Saint Mary's Players to Watch**

**Adam Gill** (Sr., F, Rochester, Minn.) Two-time First-Team All-MIAC selection

**Anthony Bohn** (So., F, Spring Hill, Fla.) Honorable-mention All-MIAC, MIAC All-Rookie Team

**David Gross** (Sr., F, Grasston, Minn.) Honorable-mention All-MIAC

**Dan Smith** (Sr., G, Rochester, Minn.) First-team All-MIAC

### **Saint Mary's Season Preview**

For Adam Gill (Rochester, Minn.), David Gross (Grasston, Minn.) and the rest of the Saint Mary's University men's hockey senior class, the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference playoffs has been the carrot dangled in front of them for the past three seasons.

In front - and just out of reach.

During their freshmen campaign in 2004-05, the Cardinals needed a win in their regular-season finale against St. Olaf, but were defeated by the Oles 3-2 in overtime, leaving SMU two points out of the fifth and final playoff spot.

It was more of the same the following year, when a 5-3 loss to Bethel in the final weekend of the season once again left the Cardinals two points out of a playoff berth.

And a year ago, the Cardinals were once again in the thick of the playoff race, only to fizzle down the stretch, losing their last six MIAC games to fall out of playoff contention.

With three years of close calls behind them, SMU coach Don Olson is hoping this year will be the year the Cardinals get over the hump - and back into the five-team conference playoffs.

"We've got a lot of veterans returning in key positions, and it's obvious that they are geared up to make a run at getting back into that playoff hunt," said SMU coach Don Olson, who returns his top seven scorers, not to mention all-conference goalie Dan Smith (Rochester, Minn.). "Hopefully we will be able to put all the pieces together and be one of those five (MIAC) teams still playing in late February."

## **St. Olaf**

**Coach:** Sean Goldsworthy

**Career Record:** 100-132-28 (11th season)

**2006-07 Finish:** 4th (9-5-2 MIAC, 11-14-2 overall)

### **St. Olaf Players to Watch**

**John Paulson** (Sr., D)

**Jeff Budish** (Sr., F)

**Dylan Mueller** (Jr., F)

**Nick Stalock** (Jr., F)

### **St. Olaf Season Preview**



The St. Olaf men's hockey team is eyeing its fifth straight postseason appearance in 2007-08 with a core group of returners, led by All-America defenseman John Paulson.

Paulson helped anchor a defensive unit that allowed only 80 goals last winter (2.96/game), good for third in the league. He also collected 16 points on eight goals, which matched a team-high with three others, and eight assists.

Helping support the defensive zone will be juniors Ryan Hampson, Sam Windsor and Barrett Simons.

Sophomore David Adams, too, returns. Adams had a goal and two assists in his rookie campaign last year.

Paulson and company hope this year's version can provide offense to support the defensive unit.

The good news is that St. Olaf lost only 16 percent of its scoring from 2006-07.

The bad news: the Oles were last in the league in scoring (2.75 goals/game) last year. The offensive drought was due in part to the Oles' efforts on the power play. St. Olaf converted only 12.5 percent (eighth of nine in the league) of its opportunities on man advantages while it allowed nine short-handed goals.

Four seniors should lead the scoring punch. Jeff Budish was second on the team in points (17) last winter while Andy Ockuly, Mike MacMillan and Justin Green each had solid campaigns with 11, nine and six points.

The Oles' will rely on a pair of juniors, Dylan Mueller and Nick Stalock, to compliment the senior group. Mueller, an All-MIAC selection last season, has been St. Olaf's top goal scorer in his first two seasons – last year he collected 21 on eight goals and 13 assists. Stalock matched Mueller's eight goals last year and could have a breakout season.

In goal, St. Olaf will search for its starter early in the season after graduating All-MIAC honorable mention pick Jeff Wilde. Junior Jake Busch and sophomore Brycen Eberwein are the Oles' only returners in net. The duo combined for five outings last year – Busch (0-2-0, 4.03 GAA), Eberwein (0-3-0, 3.72 GAA).

St. Olaf, which added nine first years to the roster, will be tested early. The Oles open at No. 2 St. Norbert tonight as a part of a two-game road trip to open 2007-08. St. Olaf opens its home schedule with a Nov. 10 battle with UW-River Falls. The MIAC schedule begins with a home-and-home with Augsburg College on Nov. 16 in Minneapolis.

## St. Thomas

**Coach:** Terry Skrypek

**Career Record:** 374-168-37 (21st season)

**2006-07 Finish:** 2nd (12-4-0 MIAC, 17-10-0 overall)

### St. Thomas Players to Watch

**Nick Pernula** (Sr., F) All-American

**Garrett Gruenke** (Sr., D) HM All-MIAC

**Nate Ryan** (Sr., F) HM All-MIAC

**Ryan Hoehn** (Sr., F)

**Andrew Panchenko** (Sr., D)

**Cameron Voss** (Jr., GK) HM All-MIAC

## St. Thomas Season Preview

St. Thomas finished strong in 2006-07 with a 10-game winning streak from mid-January through March 1. The Toms lost 5-3 in the MIAC playoff finals to Bethel to finish second in both the conference regular-season and playoffs and a 17-10 record.

Graduation losses include All-American defensemen Ryan Van Bockel and a pair of 100-point career scorers in Nick Harris (124 points) and Kevin Rollwagen (108 points). That trio helped UST post a four-year record of 71-33-9 in their era (50-11-3 in MIAC regular-season games).

Coach Terry Skrypek starts his 21st season and will coach his 700th collegiate game in February. With a good mix of veterans and new faces, Skrypek is looking to post the program's 26th consecutive winning season and make a run at the institution's 30th MIAC hockey title. Skrypek's teams have advanced to the conference playoffs all 22 years, made the finals 20 times, including the 2004 and 2005 postseason crowns on the road as a No. 2 seed.

The Tommies are now 971-567-62 in the 84-year history of their program to rank first in victories among all current Division III teams. Among the 68 other Division III hockey programs, the next most men's hockey wins is 953 by Middlebury (80 seasons).

St. Thomas has made 12 NCAA playoff appearances, including five in the last nine seasons. The Tommies have received 31 All-American honors since 1970. St. Thomas has won 13 conference titles in the last 19 seasons and has placed first or second in the MIAC 23 of the last 25 seasons. That tradition helped UST garner the No. 13 ranking in the Division III top-15 national poll by U.S. College Hockey Online.

Skrypek is hoping that senior forward Nick Pernula can pick up where he left off last season. The All-American had a streak of six consecutive multi-goal games end with a March 3 5-3 loss to Bethel in the conference playoff finals. Pernula finished with 25 goals and 22 assists for 47 points in 27 games. In 42 career games he has 28 goals and 30 assists. In 16-game MIAC stats he was first in goals (19) and tied for first in points (34). In national stats, he ranked second in power plays goals (16) and third in goals (25).

Other top forwards include seniors Ryan Hoehn, Nick Nelson and Nate Ryan. Hoehn is 26 goals in 84 career games; Nelson, an assistant captain, had eight goals in 58 games; and Ryan, an HM All-MIAC honoree last year, had eight goals and 17 assists in 2006-07.

Leading the defense will be senior captain Garrett Gruenke, a three-year contributor and one of the holdovers from UST's national runner-up team in 2004-05.

In goal, the Toms graduated two-year co-starter Treye Kettwick, but return honorable-mention All-MIAC player Cameron Voss. Voss won six consecutive starts before losing in the MIAC playoff finals. In 14 games in net he finished 8-5 with an .889 save percentage and a 2.78 goals-against average with one shutout. The goalie depth was bolstered with the transfer of sophomore Tyler Chestnut, who [played at Shattuck-St. Mary's, had a strong Juniors career, then played in 11 games last season at Division-I Holy Cross.

Other newcomers include Minnesota-Duluth transfer Adam Davis, a sophomore defenseman; freshman forward Jonathan Meyers of Eden Prairie (Juniors in Boston last season); and freshman forward David Kirsch of Superiow, Colo. (Juniors at Bismarck last season).

The Tommies start their season Nov. 2-3 with a trip to Duluth to face St. Scholastica (Friday) and UW-Superior (Saturday). Their home opener is Nov. 8 vs. UW-Stevens Point. They start MIAC play Nov. 16-17 with a series vs. defending champion Bethel. Six of the Toms' eight November games will come against teams ranked in the top 15 or squads that received votes in the poll.