

2008-09 MIAC Men's Hockey Season Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. -- The four-month long journey to settle who is the best men's hockey team in the MIAC begins this weekend with non-conference contests. According to the Preseason Coaches Poll, 2007-08 MIAC Playoff Champion St. Thomas and 2007-08 MIAC Regular Season Champion Hamline will be the top two favorites heading into conference play. The coaches ranked Gustavus, Bethel, and St. Olaf in spots three through five, respectively.

St. Thomas, under the direction of veteran head coach Terry Skrypek, enters 2008-09 with 26 consecutive winning seasons. Junior All-American goalie Tyler Chestnut will be an important figure between the pipes for the #5 ranked Tommies. Hamline is coming off the best season in program history and the Pipers did not lose one player from that team to graduation. Coach Scott Bell will look towards reigning MIAC Co-Players of the Year Dustin Fulton and Joe Long to lead Hamline.

Gustavus finished fourth in the MIAC last season and enters 2008-09 looking for their ninth consecutive MIAC Playoff berth. The Gusties will have a young defensive group, but junior captains Cody Mosbeck, David Martinson, and Joe Welch will provide both skill and leadership. Two years removed from MIAC Playoff and Regular Season titles, Bethel looks to climb back to the top of the MIAC in 2008-09. The Royals will need to blend a large class of newcomers with talented returners like Kent Bostrom and Aaron Damjanovich if they hope to repeat the success of 2006-07.

Sean Goldsworthy looks to lead St. Olaf back to the MIAC Playoffs after barely missing out last season. St. Olaf, the 2005-06 MIAC Playoff Champions, returns forwards Nick Stalock and Dylan Mueller to spark the Ole offensive attack. First-year head coach Doug Schueller hopes to bring Saint John's to their 13th MIAC Playoffs in the last 14 seasons. In order to do so, Schueller will count on key returners like Clayton Rehm, Gabriel Harren, and brothers Lance and Vince Wheeler.

A young, but experienced squad will take the ice for Augsburg in 2008-09. The Auggies have 20 underclassmen on their 27-player roster, yet Augsburg returns 16 letterwinners and seven of their top 11 scorers from last season. First-year coaches Bill Moore and Chris Howe will lead Saint Mary's and Concordia, respectively in 2008-09. Moore's Cardinals return three talented scorers in Anthony Bohn, Mike Glaesmer, and Morgan Shepherd. At Concordia, Howe will count on a trio of seniors in Alec Holen, Ryan Clukey, and Cory Johnson.

2008-09 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 (6)
2. Hamline (3)
3. Gustavus
4. Bethel
5. St. Olaf
6. Saint John's
7. Augsburg
8. Saint Mary's
9. Concordia

2008-09 MIAC Playoff Dates: First Round (Thursday, February 26); Semifinals (Saturday, February 28); Finals (Wednesday, March 4)

Augsburg

Coach: Chris Brown

Career Record: 18-27-6 (3rd season at Augsburg)

2007-08 Finish: 8th (4-12-0 MIAC, 6-17-2 overall)

Augsburg Season Preview

Youth will be served for the Augsburg College men's hockey team in 2008-09, as there will be 20 underclassmen (nine sophomores, 11 first-years) on the 27-player roster.

However, head coach Chris Brown notes that observers shouldn't automatically link the word "youth" with "inexperience." Consider that seven of the top 11 scorers from last year's Auggie squad are back, and a total of 16 letterwinners return. Consider that most of the incoming players on the Auggie roster have significant junior hockey experience, bringing added depth to this year's club.

And consider that, even with only three seniors and four juniors on the roster, Brown expects significant improvement from this year's Augsburg squad.

"The bulk of our team this year played almost every game, they played in every key situation as first-years and sophomores," Brown said. "Yeah, we're young, but just the fact that even our young guys played so much last year, and in key spots -- they're not inexperienced. We had at least eight first-years that played over two-thirds of our games last year, almost half of our skaters. That, with another large group of newcomers that are experienced, I think we'll definitely be competitive."

With that young group last year, the Auggies started slow, going 0-10-2 in the first half of the season. But the Auggies finished the season strong, with a 6-7-0 second half of the season to finish 6-17-2 overall, 4-12-0 in MIAC play. It's the team's improvement in the second half of the season that has Brown optimistic that the squad will improve this season, and possibly contend for the five-team MIAC postseason playoffs.

"We're coming off of a season that didn't look good on paper, but we knew that there was a lot of improvement throughout the year," Brown said. "There's a lot of motivation that goes with that. Nobody likes to be at the bottom of the pack ... If we perform to our capabilities, we'll definitely be a team that should compete for the playoffs."

Full preview online: <http://www.augsburg.edu/athletics/mhockey/0809preview.html>

Bethel

Coach: Joel Johnson

Career Record: 16-7-2 (2nd season)

2007-08 Finish: Tied 2nd (11-4-1 MIAC, 16-7-2 overall)

Bethel Season Preview

The 2008-2009 campaign for the Royals men's hockey team is going to be a mix of old and new. With fifteen first-year players, Bethel will be getting used to plenty of new faces. Five seniors and three juniors will provide leadership on and off the ice, including captain Kent Bostrom (Sr., Vadnais Heights, Minn.) who is a three time all-MIAC player, and goaltender Aaron Damjanovich (Jr., Remer, Minn.), a two time all-conference selection.

Though expectations are high for this year, there are also some big skates to fill as the Royals lost five significant players from last year's veteran team - four of those players earning all conference honors in their senior year. Graduating forwards Jeff Balvin, Dan Bonne, and Matt Hall, along with defensemen Steve Eastman and Bill Menozzi, contributed 48 goals and 80 assists as a group last season. Replacing them will be a tall order.

Bethel will once again rely heavily upon Damjanovich in goal and Bostrom up front to provide consistency and leadership. Helping the cause offensively will be forward Brad Peterson (Sr., Bloomington, Minn.), a three time all-MIAC honorable mention player, and forward Christian Fogerty (So., Forest Lake, Minn.), who led Bethel's freshman class a year ago. Several new and returning players will be asked to step into new offensive roles this season to round out the forward lines. On defense, the Royals bring back veterans Brent Kettelkamp (Sr., Richfield, Minn.), John Kovacs (Sr., White Bear Lake, Minn.), and Kyle Dynan (Jr., Orono, Minn.) to solidify their defensive play along with several new additions to the blue line.

The Royals were a playoff team again last year, continuing Bethel's development as an established program in a very tough MIAC conference. The bar was set high two seasons ago when Bethel won not only the conference regular season title but the playoff championship as well - advancing to the quarterfinals of the NCAA national tournament. Those expectations are in place again this year, and though there will be some learning along the way with the number of new faces, the Royals hope to find themselves in the playoff hunt again come March.

Concordia

Coach: Chris Howe

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

2007-08 Finish: 9th (0-15-1 MIAC, 1-23-1 overall)

Concordia Season Preview

Fans attending the first few games of the Concordia men's hockey team will need a program to decipher all the new names, faces and numbers associated with this year's team. The Cobbers have a new head coach and 14 fresh faces on the roster.

The biggest change for the 2007-08 Concordia team starts at the top where first-year head coach Chris Howe takes over Steve Baumgartner who stepped down after 22 years on the job. Howe comes to the Cobbers after serving as the top assistant for perennial league power St. John's for the past five seasons.

Howe will inherit a team that has a lot of experience and knows what it takes to compete in the MIAC. The Cobbers return their top three scorers from last season and both players that earned all-conference awards at the end of the year. CC also returns their captain and two of their three alternate captains from a year ago. All that experience and leadership will help the transition of the outstanding group of newcomers that Howe has assembled for 2008-09.

The senior trio of Alec Holen (Thief River Falls, Minn.), Ryan Clukey (Moorhead, Minn.) and Cory Johnson (Moorhead, Minn.) all have three years of varsity experience under their belts and the three represent the team's top scorers from last season. Holen and Clukey tied for the team in points with 16 while Johnson led the team in goals with seven. Not only will their experience on the ice pay off for all of this year's freshmen but their presence in the lockerroom will help the Cobbers as they open up play against four straight NCHA opponents. Holen and Johnson are also the team captains for 2007-08.

Junior defenseman Casey Olson (Rock Springs, Wyo.) will be the leader of the blue line crew for Howe. Olson was named to the MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention Team in 2007-08. He played in all 16 conference games last year and led all CC defensemen in shots.

The biggest question mark for Concordia the past several seasons has been in goal where the Cobbers have received a light switch of performances. The CC goalies could be "on" for part of a game but then just as quickly get turned "off" and let up several soft goals in the process. Howe will turn the duties over to a pair of talented rookies. Elliot Okland (Fr., Fargo, N.D.) and Reidar Jensen (Fr., Grand Rapids, Minn.) bring successful backgrounds to the team. Okland played in the NAHL with the FM Jets and Jensen was an All-State Honorable mention goalie for Grand Rapids in 2006-07 when the team finished second in the state tournament. Both players will be counted on to help with the transition period that will inevitably happen at the beginning of the year when CC is getting used to playing together as a team.

Howe has combed the junior hockey leagues to bring in one of the most talented recruiting class in recent history. The Cobbers will have 14 new players and nine of those have played in junior hockey. Defensemen Erick Galt (Fr., Fargo, N.D.) and Mark Johnson (Fr., Bloomington, Minn.) and forwards Marc Harrie (Fr., Fargo, N.D.) and Jared Collen (Fr., Penticton, B.C.) highlight the new crew. Galt, Johnson and Harrie all had solid careers with the FM Jets. Collen comes to the team from British Columbia where he played for the Powell River Kings and was named the recipient of the Coaches' Award in 2007-08.

Galt, Johnson, Harrie and Collen will be joined by several other players that give the Cobbers a step up in prior accomplishments and success and will help Howe navigate through his first year as a college head coach. The 2008-09 Cobbers might be an unknown quantity when they hit the ice for their first game on Halloween on Oct. 31 against UW-Stevens Point but by the time they face off against Hamline on Nov. 14 in the conference opener they could give all Concordia hockey fans a real treat.

Gustavus

Coach: Brett Peterson

Career Record: 94-98-16 (9th season)

2007-08 Finish: 4th (10-6-0 MIAC, 13-12-1 overall)

Gustavus Season Preview

The 2008-09 Gustavus men’s hockey team looks to use the experience gained from last season’s fourth place league finish and strong off-ice leadership to qualify for its ninth consecutive MIAC Post-Season Tournament and advance deeper in post-season play. Coach Petersen will count on junior captains Cody Mosbeck (Jr, Emo, Ontario), David Martinson (Jr., St. Louis Park, Minn.), and Joe Welch (Jr., Hastings, Minn.) to lead the young team. The success of the upcoming season will depend on how well the squad plays defense with a group of inexperienced defensemen and how much offensive production will be generated from returning players.

Lone returning all-conference forward David Martinson will be be looked to for help with offensive production early in the season as newcomers adjust to play at the collegiate level. Last season, Martinson led the team in scoring with 21 goals and 20 assists for 41 points and was the second-leading scorer in the MIAC. Other forwards expected to provide contributions throughout the year are Patrick Dynan (Jr, Maple Plain, Minn.) and Joe Welch. Dynan finished second on the team in scoring last year registering 10 goals and 19 assists for 29 points, while Welch compiled seven goals and eight assists for 15 points, which was fifth highest. Coach Petersen also expects newcomer Ross Ring-Jarvi (Fy., Anoka, Minn./Anoka) to make an immediate impact offensively.

Fellow juniors Tony Palma (Lino Lakes, Minn.) and Spencer Campion (Plymouth, Minn.) join Cody Mosbeck as the veterans along the blue line for the Gusties as there are no seniors on defense. First-year Justin Lee (Excelsior, Minn.) is expected provide defensive depth as well. In the nets, Coach Petersen returns two of the top goaltenders in the MIAC, Josh Swartout (So., St. Louis Park, Minn.) and Matt Lopes (Sr., East Falmouth, Mass.), to help the youthful defensive unit keep goals off the scoreboard. Swartout ended last season with a 7-2-0 league record and led the conference with a 2.29 goals against average. Lopes ranked third in the conference with a goals against average of 2.44 and finished at 3-4-0 in MIAC play. Both players will share the duties between the pipes until one emerges as the primary goaltender.

Hamline
Coach: Scott Bell
Career Record: 28-41-7 (3rd season)
2007-08 Finish: 1st (11-3-2 MIAC, 16-7-4 overall)

Hamline Season Preview

After winning the 2007-08 MIAC regular season championship and playing their way into the MIAC tournament championship game, the Hamline University Pipers are looking to remain at the top of the conference, and they have the benefit of experience on their side this time around.

Head coach Scott Bell enters his fourth season at the helm of the Pipers, and does so without losing a player from his championship team to graduation. Returning to the roster are the MIAC co-players of the year, two additional All-MIAC first team honorees, four All-MIAC honorable mention team members, and two All-Rookie team members.

Dustin Fulton (Brooklyn Park, Minn.) and Joe Long (Dayton, Minn.) return to lead a class of seven seniors on Bell's roster. The pair was named the 2007-08 MIAC co-players of the year and was named All-American for their impressive junior year campaigns. Fulton produced 50 points to lead the Pipers in scoring last year, with 21 goals and 29 assists. Long tied with another defender, All-MIAC player Jared Hummel (So., Eagan, Minn.), for second on the team in scoring at 31 points (19 goals, 12 assists). Long's impact was especially evident in special teams play, as he was the NCAA Division III statistical champion in power play goals (13).

The numbers produced by Long and Hummel (whose 31 points came from four goals and 27 assists) are indicative of the power of the Piper defense in scoring last season, and the same should hold true as All-MIAC honorable mention player Chris Berenguer (Eden Prairie, Minn.) will be with the team for the entire season this year. Berenguer, a mid-season addition to the Piper roster last year, had 17 points (four goals, 13 assists) in just 18 total games, and was fourth in the MIAC in defenseman scoring (1.08 points per conference game). Berenguer and Hummel were both named to the All-Rookie team.

Rejoining Fulton and Long as scoring threats will be All-MIAC first team player Andrew Birkholz (Sr., Maple Grove, Minn.), who was fourth on the team in scoring with 27 points (nine goals, 18 assists), and honorable mention forward Nick Zilka (So., Mound, Minn.). Zilka was tied with Berenguer, Steve Festler (Sr., Little Falls, Minn.), and Kyle Kurr (Jr., Elk River, Minn.) for fifth on the team in scoring at 19 points. Zilka had six goals and 13 assists, Festler had 12 goals and seven assists, and Kurr produced nine goals and 10 assists.

Cory Krogen (Jr., Marshall, Minn.), a defender who scored 14 points, rounds out the returning All-MIAC honorable mention skaters from last season.

The Pipers returns All-MIAC honorable mention player Matt Wanvig (Jr., Brooklyn Park, Minn.) in net, who played nearly 825 minutes and had a 2.61 GAA in MIAC play and a 2.69 GAA in all games. He will be joined by Zach Faust (Jr., White Bear Lake, Minn.), who played over 713 minutes in goal, posting a 2.97 GAA in conference games and a 2.44 GAA in overall play. Newcomer Beau Christian (Fy., Moorhead, Minn.) will join the competition for time in goal.

Hamline has added even more depth at forward with the arrival of first-years Brian Arrigoni (Saint Paul, Minn.) and Michael Schumacher (Duluth, Minn.), and at defense with Tim Olson (Apple Valley, Minn.).

Saint John's

Coach: Doug Schueller

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

2007-08 Finish: 5th (8-6-2 MIAC, 13-12-2 overall)

Saint John's Season Preview

Here's a quick reference guide to the Saint John's University hockey team heading into the 2008-09 season.

- New coach? Minnesota native and former Division I assistant, Doug Schueller.
- Upperclassmen leadership? Check.
- Young talent? You bet.
- Returning scoring? How about four of the top five scorers from the 2007-08 lineup.
- Experienced netminder? In place.

The MIAC hockey title? The goal, of course, but that remains to be seen. However, the pieces seem to be in place for the Johnnies, who finished the 2007-08 season with an 8-6-2 record in the MIAC and a 13-12-2 mark overall while making its 12th MIAC playoff appearance in the last 13 seasons. Eight of the Johnnies' 12 losses last season were by one goal.

The Johnnies return four forwards that recorded 20 or more points last season: senior captain Clayton Rehm (Park Rapids, Minn.) with 24 (8g/16a), junior Gabriel Harren (Warroad, Minn.) with 23 (9g/14a), senior Pat Connelly (Birchwood, Minn.) with 21 (10g/11a) and senior Joel Stacklie (Ham Lake, Minn.) with 21 (6g/15a). Harren and Connelly will also serve as alternate captains this season. Harren and Stacklie will miss the beginning of the season due to study-abroad programs in Europe and Australia, respectively. Both are expected to return to the team in December.

Other key returning forwards include senior Jake Hipp (Bismarck, N.D.) and sophomore Mike Wallgren (Oakdale, Minn.). Hipp collected 16 points last season and finished tied for third on the team with nine goals. Wallgren tallied 14 points (5g/9a) as a freshman and was awarded the team's Outstanding First-Year Player honor last season.

Senior Jason Johannes (Eagan, Minn.) and juniors Dylan Decker (Park City, Utah) and Karl Gilbert (Hermantown, Minn.) are also expected to move into key roles this season for the Johnnies. Gilbert played in all but one game and recorded nine points (5g/4a), including a team-leading five power-play goals. Johannes received the team's Most Improved Player award following a five-point (2g/3a) season, while Decker tallied five points (2g/3a) in 12 games for SJU.

Schueller will also turn to juniors Kyle Henkemeyer (Sauk Rapids, Minn.), Jake Koehler (Ramsey, Minn.), Chris Murray (Chanhassen, Minn.) and Jeremy Streit (Sauk Rapids, Minn.) to provide depth.

The Johnnies need to replace two key contributors from a year ago, Pat Eagles and Tom Freeman, who combined for 147 career points (60g/87a) and a plus/minus of +60 in 181 career games. Last season, Eagles led the team with 28 points (7g/21a), 12 of which came on the power play (2g/10a), while Freeman tied Connelly for the team-lead with 10 goals. Eagles was named to the All-MIAC first team, while Freeman was named honorable mention.

The lone returning senior on defense this season is Lance Wheeler (Clearwater, Minn.), who earned Academic All-MIAC honors while playing in 18 games for the Johnnies. A host of young, experienced talent will join Wheeler at the blue line this season. Sophomores Brent Brodersen (Shakopee, Minn.), Jared Smith (Grand Rapids, Minn.), Pat McClure (Maple Plain, Minn.) and James Olmscheid (St. Cloud, Minn.) all return following successful seasons as freshmen last winter. Brodersen, who played in all 27 games, led all SJU freshmen with 13 points (2g/11a), while Smith recorded four goals and eight assists. McClure and Olmscheid each played 19 games and tallied four (2g/2a) and five (0g/5a) points, respectively, in 2007-08.

The Johnnies need to replace Nate Mainz and Jordan Swan, who both graduated last May. Last season, Swan tallied 11 points (4g/7a) and earned All-MIAC first-team honors, while Mainz was named honorable mention with 16 points (7g/9a), seven of which came on the power play (4g/3a). Swan and Mainz combined for 62 points (22g/40a) and a plus/minus total of +51 in 171 games played during their career at SJU.

The Johnnie defense will surely benefit from Schueller. As an assistant coach at Bowling Green State University, he was in charge of the Falcons' defense and recruiting. Before coaching there, Schueller was a three-time captain as a defenseman at Bowling Green, recording 16 goals and 30 assists in 138 games played.

Senior goaltender and alternate captain Vince Wheeler (Clearwater, Minn.) is back between the pipes for the Johnnies after posting a 13-12-2 record with a 2.92 GAA and a .883 save percentage last season. Wheeler enters his senior season with a 20-22-4 career record as a Johnnie, with a 2.91 GAA and a .886 save percentage.

Junior Stu Van Ess (Kewaskum, Wis.) and freshmen Tony Civello (Shoreview, Minn.) and Steele DeFazio (Toronto, Ontario) will provide depth in net this season. Van Ess made eight saves in his lone appearance last winter.

Schueller had been the assistant coach for Division I Bowling Green before being hired by Saint John's on May 16. Schueller, a native of Inver Grove Heights, Minn., is the 22nd head coach in the 76-year history of SJU hockey.

SJU graduates Mike Possin (2006) and Mike Wehmhoff (1999), along with Jamie Johnson and volunteer Dennis Schueller, will assist Schueller this season.

Long-time coach John Harrington resigned on March 31 to coach Hockey Club Ambri-Piotta, a professional team in the National "A" League of Switzerland. Harrington guided the Johnnies to a 241-142-31 (.620) record with five regular season MIAC titles, 14 MIAC playoff appearances, and five NCAA appearances. His 15 seasons with the Johnnies is the longest tenure of any hockey coach in the school's history.

The Johnnies open the season on Oct. 31 against Wisconsin-Eau Claire at the National Hockey Center in St. Cloud. SJU is scheduled to play 14 home games at the NHC, including the MIAC home opener versus St. Olaf on Nov. 15.

Saint Mary's

Coach: Bill Moore
Career Record: 0-0-0 (1st season)

2007-08 Finish: 7th (6-10-0 MIAC, 9-14-2 overall)

Saint Mary's Season Preview

As if having to kick off his collegiate coaching career by following the legendary Don Olson wasn't tough enough, Saint Mary's University men's hockey coach Bill Moore found himself trying to come up with answers to two nagging questions heading into the 2008-09 season ...

Question #1: How will the Cardinals replace one-third of their goals from a year ago with the graduation of Adam Gill, Jesse Polk, Kevin Eidsmo and Devin Firl?

Question #2: How will the Cardinals replace goalie Dan Smith, who played all but 60 minutes of SMU's 1,511 minutes during his senior season, compiling a 3.91 goals-against-average and an .890 save percentage?

"We certainly have some questions that need answers as we head into the season," said Moore, who was named the program's 13th head coach in mid-July, taking over for Olson, who stepped down after 32 years as the Cardinals head coach to become the athletic director at St. Scholastica. "But it's an exciting time — everyone's excited to get the season going and see what the future holds for us."

And while graduation did hit the Cardinals hard — both offensively and defensively — the cupboard is far from bare.

In fact, if Anthony Bohn (Spring, Hill, Fla.), Mike Glaesmer (Traverse City, Mich.) and Morgan Shepherd (Brainerd, Minn.) can turn in repeat performances of a year ago, SMU's offense will be in good shape.

Bohn is back after a stellar sophomore season in which he not only led the team in assists (26) and points (31), but also led the MIAC in assists (21 in 16 games) and was second in points (25). Bohn's 31 points marked the first time an SMU player cracked the 30-point barrier since Lenny Hofmann posted 33 points during the 2003-04 season.

Glaesmer chipped in a team-best 15 goals — including an MIAC-leading 10 in 16 conference games — and was tied with Shepherd for second with 26 points.

"I don't look at it as, how do we replace one-third of our scoring from last year," explained Moore. "I look at it thinking, we're returning two-thirds of our scoring. All those players are back with a year's experience under their belts — plus, we've got an extremely talented group of first-year players."

In other words, Moore has his answer to Question #1.

Question #2, however, is another story.

With Smith gone, the goaltending battle is wide open, with junior Greg Moore (Woodbury, Minn.) and freshman Scott Pederson (Lake Villa, Ill.) landing the top two spots, while senior transfer Karac Davis (Pittsburgh, Pa.) and junior Mike Soulen (Irving, Texas) are also battling to see playing time.

"There's no doubt our biggest question mark heading into the second is goaltender," said Moore. "We're going into our first weekend (vs. St. Scholastica and UW-Superior) with two goalies who have virtually no college experience. They both did a good job in our (Red-White) scrimmages and I think through the first weeks of practice, the players have gained a ton of confidence in them."

"Now we just need to get them some game experience — and fast."

St. Olaf

Coach: Sean Goldsworthy
Career Record: 108-157-32 (12th season)
2007-08 Finish: 6th (6-7-3 MIAC, 9-12-4 overall)

St. Olaf Season Preview

The St. Olaf College men's hockey team enters 2008-09 with hopes of returning to the MIAC Playoffs. The Oles, who made four straight appearances in the event including a tournament championship in 2005-06, missed the event by one spot last winter.

Head coach Sean Goldsworthy, in his 12th season, returns a core group this year, led by a group of eight seniors.

Forwards Nick Stalock and Dylan Mueller are two of the six, and important pieces to the team's offensive puzzle. Stalock had a team-high 15 goals in 2007-08 while Mueller was second with nine. The duo has 101 career points in 143 games and the Oles' success in 2008-09, in part, will rest on their play.

The Oles also return three other senior forwards, including Sam Windsor and Roger Trousdale. Windsor had eight goals and six assists in 2007-08, good for fourth on the team with 14 points. Trousdale came on in his first season of extended action last winter to get four goals and six assists. Will Smith, the other senior forward, had three goals and four assists last year.

St. Olaf also brings back four juniors, Ben Umhoefer, Matt LaBombard, Thor Josefson and Bryan Osmondson, who have proven their offensive worth in their first two collegiate seasons. Umhoefer had ten points last season, on two goals and eight assists, while LaBombard had nine.

The team's biggest offensive addition could be transfer Isak Tranvik, who played at Division I Quinnipiac last season. Tranvik played in 37 of the Bobcats' 39 games last year, collecting seven points on two goals and five assists.

The team also added first year forwards Caleb Harrison and Nick Kang, to add depth at the position. Sophomores Matt Cosgriff and Bryan Giordano could get in the mix too.

The Oles' defensive unit has a solid group back, despite having to replace two-time All-American John Paulson, who graduated.

Seniors Barret Simons and Ryan Hampson and junior David Adams will anchor the group. Simons had a ten-point season in 2007-08, while Adams tallied six. Hampson had five as one of only two defensemen that played in every game last winter.

Eric Morrow was the other to play in every game last season, and will carry more responsibility in 2008-09.

Joining the group are talented first years Derek Grogan, Charlie Raskob and Aaron Molstad.

The Oles goaltending situation is open entering the first weekend of play. Sophomore Nick Krauss and first year Ben Leis could be the frontrunners for the job.

Senior Jake Busch, who was the Oles' best last year statistically (.905 save percentage, 2.82 GAA) will also compete for the spot.

The Oles open the 2008-09 season on Halloween night, Oct. 31, at home against Lake Forest College. The Oles then play St. Norbert College the following afternoon. St. Olaf starts its MIAC schedule on Nov. 14-15 with a home-and-home series with Saint John's University.

St. Thomas

Coach: Terry Skrypek

Career Record: 394-175-39 (22nd season)

2007-08 Finish: Tied 2nd (11-4-1 MIAC, 20-7-2 overall)

St. Thomas Season Preview

St. Thomas will look to add two more milestones in 2008-09 to its already deep men's hockey resume. UST needs nine wins to become the first Division III program to reach 1,000, and Coach Terry Skrypek needs six victories to hit 400 in his 22-year college career.

St. Thomas (991-574-64) is the Division III leader in all-time victories and one of two institutions to surpass 900 wins. Among the 68 other Division III hockey programs, the next most men's hockey wins is 970 by Middlebury (81 seasons).

St. Thomas (2000, 2005) is the lone MIAC hockey program to reach the NCAA Division III championship game. The 2000 Tommies lost 2-1 to Norwich in the finals, while the 2005 Toms lost 5-0 to Middlebury. St. Thomas has made 13 NCAA playoff appearances, including six in the last 10 seasons. The Tommies have received 33 All-American honors since 1970.

St. Thomas has won 27 regular-season conference championships, including 13 in the last 20 seasons. They've placed first or second in the MIAC 44 times, including 24 of the last 26 seasons. The Tommies have posted 26 consecutive winning seasons. They won the conference seven years in a row from 1989-95.

Skrypek will start his 22nd season in 2008-09. He's never had a losing season in 46 years as a player or as a prep and college coach (all at Minnesota private institutions). Skrypek is in a select group to coach teams to 300 wins in both high school and college and reach the championship game in both high-school and college playoffs. With a 394-175-39 record (.680 win%), he ranks in the top 10 among active Division III coaches in wins and winning percentage.

With the retirement of Don Olson at St. Mary's, Skrypek is now the dean of MIAC head coaches. While UST has had one head coach since 1987, the other eight conference programs have combined for 25 in that span, including new head coaches this season at St. Mary's, St. John's and Concordia.

Since the format began in 1983, the Tommies have been swept just four times in a regular-season conference weekend series, covering 200 weekends. They have advanced to the MIAC postseason playoffs in all 23 years the format has been used, and reached the finals 21 times. They recently have won conference playoff titles in 2004, 2005 and 2007, all on the road in the finals as the second seed.

The Tommies peaked late last season and lost in overtime of the NCAA playoff quarterfinals at St. Norbert, the eventual national champions. The Tommies finished 20-7-2 but graduated six seniors, including All-American and 100-point career scorer Nick Pernula.

Junior All-American goalie Tyler Chestnut leads the returners. Chestnut allowed just five goals in four postseason games last season and finished 18-7-2, with a .912 save percentage and a 2.07 GAA. Leading returners on defense include seniors Adam Davis (10 goals, 13 assists in 2007-08), John Jacques, Todd Alexander (two goals, nine assists) and A.J. Panchenko. Top returning forwards include sophomore Rob Johnson (12 goals, 10 assists; seniors Tom Knutson (13 goals, 15 assists) and Sean Bryant (six goals, four assists); and juniors Alex Arnason (eight goals, 10 assists) and Alex Coles (eight goals, five assists).

Skrypek's newcomers include three transfers from Division I programs -- sophomore forward Evan Mackintosh played in 22 games last season at Wayne State; junior forward Ian Schaser played in 39 games at Mass.-Lowell; and junior forward Parker Burgess played two seasons back at Robert Morris. Also, sophomore defenseman Kelly Kranz played in 11 games last season at St. Mary's.

The Tommies start their season with home games Oct. 31-Nov. 1 against No. 13-ranked UW-Superior and St. Scholastica. They start MIAC play Nov. 21-22 with a series vs. Augsburg. Five of the Toms' first 12 games will come against teams ranked in the top 15.

The Tommies will play Nov. 28-29 in Middlebury's Primelink Shootout, facing the host team, now ranked seventh, and either No. 2-rated Plattsburgh or No. 4-ranked Norwich.