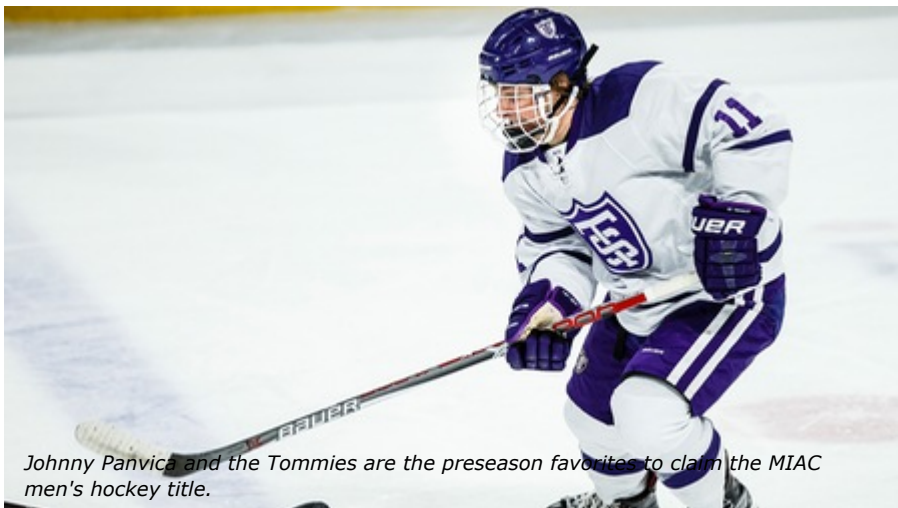


2019-20 MIAC Men's Hockey Preview

Posted: Oct 29, 2019

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – The puck is set to drop on the 2019-20 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) men's hockey season this Friday, November 1 and before teams take to the ice, conference coaches submitted their ballots for the annual Preseason Coaches' Poll. The results suggest another very competitive season, as four different MIAC teams picked up first-place votes.

The University of St. Thomas emerged as the early favorite to win the league title, collecting 58 points in the preseason coaches' balloting. The Tommies - who enter the 2019-20 campaign with 37 consecutive winning seasons and receiving votes in the preseason USCHO.com national top-15 poll - went 8-3-5 in conference play last year, earning the No. 3 seed in the MIAC Playoffs. St. Thomas returns leading scorer **Brett Gravelle** to the lineup this season, which will be key to the Toms' hopes at a conference title. The Tommies are 23-5-3 in games when Gravelle scores a goal, which he did 18 times last season. The Forest Lake, Minn. native has registered a point in 14 of his last 16 games and scored a goal in 41 of his 78 appearances for the Tommies.



Johnny Panvica and the Tommies are the preseason favorites to claim the MIAC men's hockey title.

Augsburg also received three first-place votes in the preseason balloting, coming in just behind the Tommies with 54 total points. Winners of four straight MIAC Playoff titles and ranked No. 7 in the country to start the year, the Auggies will be challenged to replace four graduated All-MIAC selections - including MIAC Player of the Year Nick Schmit in goal and All-American scoring machine Alex Rodriguez. However, defender **John O'Connor** will be back in the lineup after leading all MIAC defensemen with 17 points and 15 assists last season. An All-America selection last season, O'Connor played a key role on the Auggies' power-play unit, helping Augsburg to a 26.6 percent conversion rate - fifth-best in Division III last year. The All-MIAC defender recorded a point in 12 of 27 games played as a junior, tallying multiple assists in four games.

Saint John's garnered a pair of first-place votes, finishing with 53 points in the balloting. The Johnnies - who have reached the conference tournament six times in the last eight seasons and received votes in the first national poll of the year - pushed Augsburg to the limit before falling, 2-1, in last year's incredible four-overtime MIAC Playoff championship game. Goaltender **Andrew Lindgren** made a school-record 86 saves in the game, third-most in NCAA Division III history. Last year's MIAC leader in save percentage is among four All-Conference selections expected back on the ice for the Johnnies this season.

Concordia picked up one first-place vote, tallying 48 points to come in fourth in the Coaches' Poll. The Cobbers return All-American forward **Tyler Bossert**, who led the team in scoring with 11 goals and 28 assists on the year. His 28 assists were tied for fifth-most in all of NCAA Division III and sixth-most in school history, while his 39 total points are the most by a Cobber since Marc Terris' 46 in 1993. Bossert logged a point in 21 of the team's 26 games as a sophomore and had at least two points in 11 of those contests.

Gustavus is fifth in the Preseason Coaches' Poll with 35 points. The Gusties went 4-11-1 last year after going 9-7 and reaching the 2018 MIAC Playoff title game two seasons ago. Gustavus will look to get back to that form in 2019 with rising junior **Robbie Goor** back between the pipes. A 2018 MIAC All-Rookie Team selection and 2019 honorable mention All-Conference pick, Goor posted a 1.92 goals-against average and a .933 save percentage in nearly 700 minutes of action as a sophomore last season, allowing just one goal in each of his last four games, including a 32-save 3-1 victory over then No. 4-ranked Augsburg.

Saint Mary's received 28 points in the preseason balloting to come in sixth in the Coaches' Poll. The Cardinals are set to return several experienced players this winter, including junior forward **Tommy Stang**. A First Team All-MIAC pick last March, Stang set career highs in all three offensive categories in 2018-19, while leading the team in both goals (13) and points (22). He also put together a team-high four-game goal-scoring streak and closed out last season by scoring in six of Cardinals' final eight games.

Hamline picked up 19 points in the preseason balloting. The Pipers split their final three conference series and ended the 2018-19 season on a high note by handing St. Thomas a 2-1 loss in the regular season finale. Several members of last year's squad are expected back for the 2019-20 campaign, including honorable mention All-MIAC forward **Weiland Parrish**, who led the Pipers in scoring with 10 goals and five assists last season.

Bethel finished just behind Hamline in the balloting with 18 points. The Royals posted their best record in conference play since the 2012-13 season last year and will look to build upon that success heading into Chris McKelvie's second season at the helm. Sophomore goaltender **Ridge Gerads** made a strong first impression in his debut season last year, stopping 296 pucks with a save percentage of .934 in just over 500 minutes between the pipes.

St. Olaf logged 11 points in the preseason coaches' balloting. The Oles moved into a new on-campus home last January and will look to christen it with a win on opening weekend when Aurora visits St. Olaf Ice Arena for a two-game series on November 1-2. St. Olaf returns two-time All-MIAC defender **Tuukka Totro** to the lineup for his senior season. The Helsinki, Finland product recorded three goals and five assists in 21 games for the Oles last year, including a two-goal game at No. 3 Wis.-Eau Claire on January 12.

Complete 2019-20 Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (8 for first, 7 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.

2019-20 MIAC Men's Hockey Preseason Coaches' Poll

Rank	Institution (First-Place Votes)	Total
1.	St. Thomas (3)	58
2.	Augsburg (3)	54
3.	Saint John's (2)	53
4.	Concordia (1)	48
5.	Gustavus	35
6.	Saint Mary's	28
7.	Hamline	19
8.	Bethel	18
9.	St. Olaf	11

2020 MIAC Men's Hockey Playoffs

The 2020 MIAC Men's Hockey Playoffs will feature the top five teams in the Conference standings playing in a high-seed-host, single-elimination postseason tournament. The lone quarterfinal game between the No. 4 and No. 5 seeds will now be played Thursday, Feb. 27, with the two semifinal games to follow on Saturday, Feb. 29. The MIAC Championship game is set for the following Saturday, March 7. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2020 NCAA Division III Men's Hockey Tournament.

Odds and Ends

-The 2019-20 season will be the first without the annual MIAC Men's Hockey Showcase, which finished its storied run last October at The Super Rink in Blaine, Minn. Non-conference play on opening weekend will return to campuses and other home venues for MIAC teams this season.

-St. Olaf announced the hiring of Cole Workman as its interim head coach on September 10. Workman, who served as an assistant at NCAA Division I Bemidji State University last season, played four years of hockey at Finlandia University where he was a three-time Northern Collegiate Hockey Association (NCHA) All-Academic Team honoree. Saint Mary's named Ryan Egan its new head coach on June 27. Egan previously served as a Cardinals assistant from 2009-14 before spending the last five years as a head coach and general manager in junior hockey with teams in the NA3HL and NAHL.

-Five MIAC coaches are entering double-digit seasons at the helm of their respective programs. Gustavus' Brett Petersen leads the way, entering his 20th year with the Gusties, followed by Chris Brown coming into his 14th season at Augsburg. Concordia's Chris Howe and Saint John's Doug Schueller will both begin their 12th seasons, while St. Thomas' Jeff Boeser will make it a decade at the helm of St. Thomas. Howe and Boeser were both MIAC student-athlete standouts as well. Boeser earned MIAC MVP honors as a Tommie in 1974, while Howe helped Saint John's to a national semifinal appearance in 1997.

Celebrating a Century

The MIAC is celebrating its 100-year anniversary throughout the 2019-20 season. The conference's Centennial celebration will highlight the many outstanding moments, memories, and individuals who helped build the MIAC over the last century. Initiatives will include student-athlete, coach, and administrator spotlights, historical photos showcasing the evolution of MIAC sports and teams through the years, recognition of former MIAC student-athletes who continued their time in the conference as coaches and administrators, and more. The official #MIAC100 webpage is housed at <https://www.miacathletics.com/miac100>.