

2002 MIAC Indoor Track & Field Championships Preview

Men

Carleton graduated last year's MIAC Outstanding Performer of the MIAC Championship in Andy Sherman, who won the 3,000 and 5,000 meters at last year's meet. This year's squad has been one of Bill Terriquez's hardest-working, though, and the Knights hope to reap the rewards this weekend. Rob Williams seeks a breakthrough performance in the sprints. Bryan Donald has been a frontrunner in the distance events and the distance medley squad hopes to repeat its title from 2001.

Concordia has had success in the indoor season, finishing second at two meets and fourth at a third - behind two NAIA powerhouses and a Division II team. Brad Ragan will be counted on to score points in both the weight throw and shot put. Ragan finished fourth in the shot put last year, and should improve on that finish this season. Paul Poduska has won the high jump at two different meets this year. He finished tied for third at last year's championship meet. In the track events, the Cobbers are led by Kirk Nelson in the 1,000 and 1,500 meters. Concordia has also excelled in the distance medley relay, winning the event at two different meets.

Jerry Washington and Ryan Hoag lead a list of five Gusties who have provisionally qualified for the NCAA Indoor Championships. Hoag and Washington earned their provisional times in the 55-meter and 60-meter dash and Hoag also provisionally qualified in the 400-meter dash. Luke Speltz leads the Gustavus throwers with an automatic-qualifying throw in the shot put. He and Jesse Harvey have each provisionally qualified in the weight throw as well. Pole vaulter Josh Gysbers set a school record last week by clearing the 15'5 1/2" mark, good enough to provisionally qualify for nationals.

SJU will try to improve on its seventh place finish at last year's MIAC indoor meet. The Johnnies will rely on their balance and try to score in almost every event. Individually, SJU junior John Mathews is the defending 1,500-meter outdoor champion and finished 11th in the 3,000-meter run at last year's indoor meet. Mathews was also a member of last year's SJU medley relay team that finished second at the indoor championship. Senior Andy Keenan is also running well for Johnnies during the indoor season. He finished fifth in last year's 3,000 meters at the MIAC indoor meet.

St. Olaf is paced by Cory Dingels, who has achieved an NCAA automatic qualifier for two events, the long and high jumps. Dingels' long jump is 7.24 m (23'9") and his high jump is 2.08 m (6'9 3/4").

The Macalester men are looking to improve on last year's 10th-place conference finish and will look to Kajerero Ssebbaale to lead the way. The All-American is going for his fourth straight MIAC indoor triple jump title and this spring will be going for his fourth straight outdoor crown. He'll also gun for a top finish in the long jump. Mikhail Higgins could be a factor in the hurdles, and sprinters David Scott and Tommy Kridiotis should also score points for the Scots.

The Tommies are led by three juniors who have already have met the NCAA provisional qualifying standards in the 55 dash, 55 hurdles and 400 meters, respectively -- Roman Cress, the 2000 NCAA Indoor Championships runner-up at 55 meters; 2000 hurdles All-American Craig Benson; and sprinter Andrew Hilliard, who ran on the winning 4x200 and 4x400 relays at the 2001 MIAC indoor meet.

Two cross country All-Americans -- junior Brian Preus and senior Nick Maddox -- lead the Tommie distance corps, which is expected to score well at conference in the three distance races. The Tommies won the 2001 MIAC cross country championship and placed fifth at the NCAA meet last November.

Women

Bethel is looking to improve on a ninth-place finish at last year's indoor championships. Senior Angela Wolkowski will look to score points in the distance events. She is a two-time All-MIAC runner in women's cross country.

Carleton, hosting its first indoor championship, hopes to continue its success in its own building in 2002, as the Knights have won two invitationals this winter at the Recreation Center. The Knights are paced by a strong distance and hurdler group, along with a pair of talented multi-eventers. Laura Bloedorn won the 5,000 meters at last year's indoor championship and earned All-America honors in the outdoor 10,000. Carrie Stuart rebounded from a rough indoor season last year to earn All-America honors in the 400-meter hurdles for the second straight year. She will also contend in the pentathlon, where she's the defending outdoor champion, and the long jump. Sarah Paul is the defending pentathlon champion and will lend support in the sprints and jumps. The Knights are gunning for a strong showing in their own building.

Concordia, which has finished second the past two years, will be counting on the strength of their field events to carry it to the top of the MIAC. The team possesses two outstanding throwers in Becky Lacher and Mariah Mougey who will be looking to contend in the weight throw. Both athletes have provisionally qualified for the national meet in the event, and both marks should be good enough to get them into the meet. Lacher will also be a contender in the shot put, along with teammate Erica Eastley. The other key performer for the Cobbers will be Kelli Tranby, who won last year's MIAC outdoor long jump. She has provisionally qualified for the nationals in the event with a jump of 17-11 1/2. Beth Moen leads a corps of young runners competing in the 3,000 and 5,000 meters.

Gustavus' returning All-American Jackie Luehmann is back as a favorite in the women's shot put event. Luehmann tossed for a school record 45-1 3/4 mark last weekend to earn an automatic qualifying mark at the NCAA Indoor Championships. She is joined by provisional qualifier Kristen Petersen in the event. Lindsay Weis has qualified provisionally in the high jump for the Gusties, and Kristi Schneider has earned a provisional mark in the pole vault.

Ashley Dingels became Saint Mary's first-ever national qualifier when she cleared 5'7" in the high jump at the inaugural SMU Open on Jan. 26. Amber Liss has broken the school record in the 400 three times this season, lowering it to its current mark, 60.22, at the UNI Dome Open two weeks ago.

Macalester's Katie Christensen was fourth last winter in the pentathlon, and along with sprinter Liz Durney, should contend for a high MIAC finish. Ellie Lewis could also be a factor in the jumps.

The St. Thomas women have won 14 of the 17 total MIAC Indoor Track and Field Championships held. Coach Joe Sweeney graduated several All-Americans from 2001, but has a few key returners and some talented young competitors.

Junior Tish Dusich was voted Most Outstanding Athlete of the 2001 MIAC Indoor Championships after she won the 600 and 800 in meet-record times and anchored the runner-up 4x800 relay. Sprinters/jumpers Jill Ylonen and Heidi Vogel also have good scoring potential.

St. Olaf's Megan Daymont currently holds the nation's fastest 800 meter time in 2:12.75. Daymont has posted an automatic-qualifying standard in both the 800 and 1,500 meters. She's also the current MIAC record-holder for the 400, 600, 800, 1000, 1500 meters. Becky Peterson in the 55 M hurdles is an NCAA provisional qualifier.