

2008 MIAC Men's Outdoor Track & Field Championships Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. -- The 2008 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) Outdoor Track & Field Championships will take place May 9-10 at the Klas Center on the campus of Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn.



The St. Thomas/Saint John's rivalry should be exciting to watch this weekend at the MIAC Championships as the Tommies and Johnnies figure to be the two top contenders for the title. Saint John's won the 2007 Outdoor Championship and St. Thomas won the 2008 Indoor Title. Gustavus, Concordia and host Hamline should contend for spots in the top half of the team standings with some talented athletes on each of their rosters.

Bethel, St. Olaf, and Macalester will look to break into the top half of the conference, but will need to find more point scorers to contend for the title. If Carleton, Saint Mary's, and Augsburg have some good individual and relay finishes, they could make a move up in the standings.

Augsburg

Coach: Dennis Barker (14th season)

2007 Championships Finish: 11th

Augsburg Athletes to Watch

Kevin Haglund (Sr., Fridley, Minn.)

Brent Haglund (So., Fridley, Minn.)

Nick Ward (Fy., Coon Rapids, Minn.)

James Strand (So., Brainerd, Minn.)

Josh Groll (So., Plymouth, Minn./Robbinsdale Armstrong)

David Nestrud (So., Braham, Minn.)

Augsburg Championships Preview

Augsburg College will have several individuals in contention for All-MIAC honors at this weekend's MIAC outdoor championships. Key among them will be senior triple jumper Kevin Haglund (SR, Fridley, Minn.). At last year's MIAC outdoor meet, he broke a 20-year-old school record in the triple jump to finish third in the conference, and this year, he broke the school record again with a distance of 14.27 meters (46-feet, 10.0-inches).

Nick Ward (FY, Coon Rapids, Minn.) has been one of the top sprinters in the conference this spring, currently standing in the top 20 in the conference rankings in all three sprint events -- fourth-fastest in the 200 (22.35), sixth-fastest in the 100 (11.04) and 18th in the 400 (51.03). He also stands ninth in the long jump conference rankings (6.52 meters/21-feet, 4.75-inches).

Brent Haglund (SO, Fridley, Minn.) has been strong in both long-distance events. He broke his school record in the 10,000-meter run (31:40.05) by nearly 18 seconds earlier this season, a time that stands third-fastest among MIAC athletes this spring. He also stands 12th-fastest among MIAC athletes in the 5,000-meter run (15:26.13). At the MIAC indoor championships, he set a school record in the indoor 5,000 (15:18.49).

James Strand (SO, Brainerd, Minn.) has been solid in the sprints and hurdles, currently standing sixth-fastest among MIAC athletes in the 400-meter dash (49.96), ninth in the 400-meter hurdles (56.28) and 18th in the 200 (22.65). D.J. Wendell (JR, Princeton, Minn./Charles M. Russell (Mont.) HS) also has been a solid sprinter this season. David Nestrud (SO, Braham, Minn.) stands ninth in the 110-meter hurdles (15.70), with Adam Horkey (SO, Windom, Minn.) 10th in the event (15.73).

Josh Groll (SO, Plymouth, Minn./Robbinsdale Armstrong HS) has been Augsburg's top competitor in the weight events, currently standing 14th among MIAC athletes in the hammer throw (44.90 meters/147-feet, 4.0-inches) and 19th in the shot put (12.99 meters/42-feet, 7.5-inches).

Bethel

Coach: Jim Timp (3rd season)

2007 Championships Finish: Tied 6th

Bethel Athletes to Watch

Taylor Ferda (So., Whitefish, Mont.)
Josh Otto (Sr., White Bear Lake, Minn.)
Lucas Blodgett (Jr., Ellsworth, Wis.)
Dan Greeno (So., St. Michael, Minn.)
Carl Gladitsch (Jr., Bloomer, Wis.)
Eric Rhode (So., North St. Paul, Minn.)

Bethel Championships Preview
Despite the obstacles that Minnesota weather has presented to the Bethel men’s track team, they are undaunted and look to perform well at the MIAC championships. Individually, 2008 NCAA Indoor Track and Field All-American Taylor Ferda has been a consistent top hurdler and was a valuable member of the 4 x 400 meter team that earned a trip to the finals at the Drake Relays. 2007 Indoor Track and Field All-American Josh Otto was also a member of that team and knows he has what it takes to earn a trip to the national meet. NCAA Cross Country All-Americans Dan Greeno and Carl Gladitsch will be athletes to watch in their respective distance running and will also make a strong case for a trip to nationals. In field events, Lucas Blodgett earned a trip to the national meet last year for the hammer throw, and has been working toward a return trip since. As a team, the Royals know that St. Thomas and Saint John’s are the teams to beat based on the indoor season and last year’s results. Bethel has a young and talented team that will enter the meet with the intention of jockeying for one of the top four spots.

Carleton
Coach: Dave Ricks (3rd season)
2007 Championships Finish: 9th

Carleton Athletes to Watch
Tom Ballinger (Jr., Plymouth, Minn./Robbinsdale Armstrong)
Kane Bechstein (Jr., Apple Valley, Minn./Eastview)
Nick Cesarek (Jr., Eagan, Minn./Eastview)
Jack Delehanty (Jr., Madison, Wis./Monona Grove)
Charlie Gamble (So., San Diego, Calif./La Jolla)
Joe Sepe (Sr., Fargo, N.D./South)

Carleton Championships Preview

The Carleton men’s track and field team will look to carry its strong showing at the conference indoor meet over to this year’s MIAC Outdoor Championships. When the Knights finished fifth indoors, the team established 18 personal bests. Carleton will need some outstanding performances once again to move into the upper half at the outdoor meet.

Junior Tom Ballinger (Wenatchee, Wash./Wenatchee) figures to be one of Carleton’s top scorers. He owns a top 10 ranking in four events and is currently the top seed in the 400-meter dash and 400-meter hurdles, where he’s recorded an NCAA provisional qualifying time. Ballinger placed in the 110-meter hurdles and 400m hurdles at last year’s event. He has been involved in Carleton’s 4x100-meter and 4x400-meter relays this year as well.

Kane Bechstein (Jr./Apple Valley, Minn./Eastview) and Nick Cesarek (Jr./Eagan, Minn./Eastview) provide the Knights with the chance for points in a variety of events. Bechstein will be looked upon to place in the decathlon, javelin, pole vault and will run a leg on the 4x100m relay. Cesarek will be among Carleton’s top hopes in the sprints as he owns top-10 times in the 200-meter dash and 400m dash as well as a top-10 seed in the javelin.

Jack Delehanty (Jr./Madison, Wis./Monona Grove) is among the top 800-meter racers in the conference and will also run a leg on the 4x400m relay.

Joe Sepe (Sr./ Fargo, N.D./South) and Charlie Gamble (So./San Diego, Calif./La Jolla) are two of several strong distance runners the Knights have on the roster. Sepe won the 10K at the Gina Relays and owns a top-10 time in the 5,000-meter run, an event that he placed fourth in a year ago. Gamble is among the conference leaders in the 1,500-meter run and the 5K.

Concordia

Coach: Garrick Larson (15th season)

2007 Championships Finish: Tied 3rd

Concordia Athletes to Watch
Tom Flynn (Jr., Shelby, Mont.)
Josh Smith (Sr., Staples, Minn./Staples-Motley)
Dusten Olejnicak (Sr., Brainerd, Minn.)
Billy Oehlers (Jr., North Branch, Minn.)
Paul Westmark (Jr., Appleton, Wis.)

Concordia Championships Preview

The Concordia field athletes will lead the way for the Cobbers at the 2008 MIAC Outdoor Track and Field Championship Meet. Concordia has nine different athletes with over 11 different top 10 marks in the conference this season. On the other side of the coin, the Cobbers have only two track athletes with top ten times in the MIAC.

Leading the way for the Cobbers in 2008 will be junior Paul Westmark (Appleton, Wis.). Westmark will be looking to earn the moniker of the conference's best all-around athlete this spring. He has the top score in the decathlon heading into the conference meet and owns top ten marks in three different events. He has the eighth best mark in the triple jump (43-06.50) and the sixth fastest times in both the 110-meter and 400-meter hurdle events. Last year he finished fourth in the decathlon at the conference meet and he is coming off a fourth-place finish in the heptathlon at the MIAC Indoor Track and Field Meet.

Concordia has a trio of field events where they have multiple top ten athletes. The javelin, discus and shot put have all been kind to CC this spring and will look to help out with multiple points at the conference meet. The Cobbers have three of the top five marks in the javelin and have a fourth athlete with the ninth best distance.

Tom Flynn (Jr., Shelby, Mont.) leads the quartet of javelin stars for Concordia. His distance of 185-01 at the Bison Open is the second best in the MIAC this year and is less than three feet from provisionally qualifying for the national meet. The other top five javelin throwers include Nick Bircherm (Jr., Lisbon, N.D.) and Jeff Bakke (So., Grand Forks, N.D./Red River HS). Paul Shol (Jr., Fergus Falls, Minn.) is the fourth athlete to have a top ten distance in the vent this year. Shol is also ranked second in the decathlon this year.

In the discus, Giles Henry (St. Cloud, Minn./St. Cloud Tech HS) and Bircherm own top six marks. Henry is fourth with a distance of 146-05 and Bircherm is sixth at 141-09. The shot put features three CC athletes in the top ten. Billy Oehlers (Jr., North Branch, Minn.) is looking to cap a breakout track and field season. He has the third best toss in the conference at 50-05.25 and is coming off a third-place finish in the shot put at the conference indoor meet. Senior Joey Twigg (Detroit Lakes, Minn.) posted a distance of 46-02 at the St. John's Invite and currently sits in eight position, while Bircherm is ranked ninth in the event with a mark of 45-10.

The other CC field athlete that has a chance to score top points at the MIAC meet is senior Dusten Olejnicak (Brainerd, Minn.) who has the eight best distance in the long jump but has yet to find a rhythm after placing sixth at the conference indoor meet.

Westmark is the top track athlete for the Cobbers having recorded top six times in both of the hurdle events. After Westmark, senior Josh Smith (Staples, Minn./Staples-Motley HS) will be looking to cap his career in style in the 400 meters. He is currently ranked 11th in the event with a time of 50.98 but has the pedigree to win the race at the conference meet. He finished fourth in the indoor 400 this season and was in the top seven at last year's outdoor meet.

The Cobber relay teams have posted improved times this season and have challenged several school records. The 4x100-meter relay team of Jason Sather (So., Plymouth, Minn./Armstrong HS), Perry Patterson (So., Ham Lake, Minn./Blaine HS), Flynn and Xavier Carroll (So., El Cajon, Calif./Grossmont HS) ran a 43.37 at the Drake Relays. That time is only 0.06 of a second behind the top CC time from last year and is currently the fifth fastest in the MIAC this season.

The depth of several field events and the intrigue of all-around athlete Paul Westmark will be the top story lines for Concordia at the conference meet. But the Cobber team might steal the show if they can together their best performance of the season which will lead to their best finish at the MIAC meet in several years.

Gustavus

Coach: Tom Thorkelson (10th season)

2007 Championships Finish: Tied 3rd

Gustavus Athletes to Watch

Drew Hood (Sr., Mankato, Minn.)
Tyler Geyen (Sr., Watertown, Minn.)
Cole Carlson (So., Mora, Minn./Mora)

Gustavus Championships Preview
The Gustavus men’s track and field team will be looking to post their second consecutive upper division finish after placing third at last year’s conference outdoor meet. The Gusties have struggled with the weather this spring as they have had two home meets cancelled due to severe weather conditions. Sophomore Cole Carlson and freshman Colby Citrowske will lead Gustavus in the sprints as Carlson enters the conference meet ranked third in the 400 (49.62) and eighth in the 200 (22.60), while Citrowske currently ranks eighth in the 100 (11.15). Carlson is also a key part of the Gusties 4x400 relay team that is seeded fifth with a time of 3:23.21. Veteran Tyler Geyen will be hoping to complete his standout career with a first place finish in the 110 high hurdles. Geyen finished second at last year’s meet. Sophomore Mark Hartman will lead the way in the distance races as he is seeded eighth in the 10,000 with a time of 32:37.88, while senior pole vaulter Drew Hood will attempt to win his second consecutive outdoor title. Hood, who reached a height of 14 feet, 11 1/2 inches last year at the conference meet, is currently seeded fourth at a height of 14 feet, 8 1/4 inches.

Hamline
Coach: Lynden Reder (2nd season)

2007 Championships Finish: 5th

Hamline Athletes to Watch
Derall King (Fy., Inver Grove Heights, Minn./Henry Sibley)
Brandon Gleason (Jr., Mantorville, Minn./Kasson-Mantorville)
Clarence Suttle (Fy., St. Paul, Minn./Johnson)
Jon Helm (So., Roseville, Minn.)
Andy Norman (Fy., Winona, Minn.)
Tyson Molitor (Fy., Belgrade, Minn./Sauk Centre)

Hamline Championships Preview

The Pipers head into the 2008 championships on their own track with a strong first-year class and having set several NCAA provisional marks this season. Head coach Lynden Reder will be looking to his first-years and his thrower to gather plenty of points for the Pipers.

A point of focus on the track may be Hamline's 1600 meter relay team, comprised of four first-years (Clarence Suttle, Ryan Sunderland, Dan Holmgren, and Javan Copley), which has made a splash this spring's races, including competing in the Drake Relays.

Although the sprinters may be young, at the distance events the Pipers have veteran leadership from Brandon Gleason, who will be looking to qualify for outdoor nationals after doing so in the 5000 meters during the indoor season. Along with Gleason, another first-year, Ian Campbell, will be looking to impress at Klas Center.

Reder will also look to gather points in throws, as first-years Derall King and Andy Norman have gained valuable experience from watching sophomores Jon Helm and Derek Synan-Peterson and junior Colin MacFarlane. The Pipers look to place several athletes near the top in the throws categories.

Macalester

Coach: Martin Peper (15th season)

2007 Championships Finish: 8th

Macalester Athletes to Watch

Evan Mitchell (Sr., Minneapolis, Minn./South)

Andrew Yokom (Jr., Arden Hills, Minn./Mounds View)

Wade Eckstrom (So., La Crescent, Minn.)

Matt Wegmann (Sr., North Oaks, Minn./Mounds View)

Kevin Williams (Jr., Jamaica)

Josh Springer (Sr., Portland, Ore./Cleveland)

Macalester Championships Preview

Evan Mitchell (Sr., Minneapolis, Minn. / South) is having his best spring ever and is going for his third straight MIAC javelin title. Mitchell's national provisional qualifying toss of 189-4 is best this spring in the MIAC. Wade Eckstrom (So.,La Crescent, Minn.) is a top MIAC contender at 1500 meters and headlines a solid Macalester middle-distance group. The Scots are looking for a high finish in the 4x800-meter relay behind the efforts of Eckstrom, Josh Springer (Sr.,Portland, Ore. / Cleveland), Will Kennedy (Jr., San Anselmo, Calif. / Branson School) and Tyson Morgan (Jr., Lewiston,Me.).

400-meter intermediate hurdle standout Andrew Yokom (Jr., Arden Hills, Minn. / Mounds View) was one of three MIAC standouts to reach the finals at nationals last season and will again be a top contender in this event. Kevin Williams (Jr.,Jamaica) is looking to make the finals in the short sprints, while Matt Wegmann (Sr., North Oaks, Minn. / Mounds View) and Kyle Braam (Sr., Burnsville, Minn.) lead Mac's distance running contingent. Martin Stenman Andersson (So.,Uppsala, Sweden / IT Gymnasiet Uppsala) was seventh in the indoor heptathlon and will be shooting for a high decathlon finish.

Saint John's

Coach: Tim Miles (29th season)

2007 Championships Finish: 1st

Saint John's Athletes to Watch

Chris Erichsen (Sr., Spring Valley, Minn./Kingsland)

Kelly Fermoye (Sr., Mendota Heights, Minn./Henry Sibley)

Erik Diley (Sr., Prescott, Wis.)

Mike Leither (Sr., St. Cloud, Minn./Cathedral)

Eric Buss (Jr., Coon Rapids, Minn.)

Brayden Wagner (Jr., Englevale, N.D./Lisbon)

Saint John's Championships Preview

The Saint John's University track and field team is poised to make another championship run this spring. Last year, SJU finished with its fourth MIAC outdoor championship in 11 years and a fourth-place finish at the NCAA Division III Outdoor Championships.

Senior Chris Erichsen (Spring Valley, Minn./Kingsland), the defending MIAC champion in both the 1,500- and 5,000-meter runs, currently leads all MIAC runners in both the 5,000-meter run (14:25.70) and 3,000-meter steeplechase (9:04.72), two events in which he has already automatically qualified for the NCAA Championships. Erichsen is also third in the 1,500-meter run in the MIAC with a NCAA provisional time of 3:55.69. At the 2007 NCAA Division III Outdoor Championships, Erichsen earned All-America honors in the 3,000-meter steeplechase (second) and the 5,000-meter run (fourth). He recently earned All-America honors with a sixth-place finish in the 5,000-meter run at the NCAA Indoor Championships in March.

Senior Kelly Fermoye (Mendota Heights, Minn./Henry Sibley) is the defending conference champion in the 10,000-meter run and currently leads the MIAC with an NCAA provisional time of 30:43.36. Fermoye is also on the heels of teammate Chris Erichsen in the 5,000-meter run with a time of 15:01.55, good enough for third-best in the MIAC. Fermoye finished second in the event at last year's MIAC Championships.

Senior Erik Diley (Prescott, Wis.) currently leads the MIAC with a NCAA provisional distance of 14.26 meters in the triple jump and is ranked second in the MIAC in the long jump with a distance of 6.90 meters. Along with capturing the long jump title at the 2007 MIAC Outdoor Championships, Diley placed second in the triple jump, and went on to earn All-America honors with a fifth-place finish in the long jump at the 2007 NCAA Championships.

Senior Mike Leither (St. Cloud, Minn./Cathedral) is a member of the three-time defending 4x400 meter relay team and is also the two-time and current defending champion in the 400-meter hurdles. Leither is currently fourth in the MIAC with a time of 54.76.

Junior Eric Buss (Coon Rapids, Minn.) is the defending MIAC champion in the triple jump and is currently fifth in the MIAC with a NCAA provisional distance of 13.52 meters. Buss has already earned All-America honors this year with a third-place finish in the triple jump at the 2008 NCAA Indoor Championships. Buss also finished second in the long jump last year at the conference meet, and then went on to earn All-America honors with a seventh-place finish at the NCAA Outdoor Championships last May.

Other Johnnies to watch include junior Brayden Wagner (Englevale, N.D./Lisbon), who leads the MIAC with a distance of 4.6 meters in the pole vault, and junior Mitch Gesell (Alexandria, Minn.). Gesell is second in the MIAC in the 800-meter run and finished third in the event at the 2007 MIAC Championships. Sophomore Ryan Noack (St. Cloud, Minn./Cathedral) ranks second in the MIAC, after Erichsen, in the 3,000-meter steeplechase with a time of 9:39.30.

Saint Mary's

Coach: Shawn McMahon (1st season)

2007 Championships Finish: 10th

Saint Mary's Athletes to Watch

Chris Fiset te (Jr., Elmhurst, Ill.)
Derek Wherley (Jr., Missoula, Mont.)
Josiah Ryks (So., Austin, Minn.)

Saint Mary's Championships Preview
Saint Mary's University track and field coach Shawn McMahon went through his first conference championship "experience" in early March, and it left him hungry for more. And the first-year head coach is expecting his Cardinals to quiet that hunger at this weekend's Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Outdoor Championships. "We had a pretty good showing (at the indoor championships), and I'm hoping that was just a sign of things to come," said McMahon, who watched his Cardinals break a pair of school records and post five top-10 finishes at the indoor championships. "We've had an interesting spring < the weather hasn't exactly been too cooperative, but, hopefully, we will be able to put together our best performance of the season this weekend." Chris Fisette has led the way for the Cardinal men, following up his fourth- and fifth-place finishes in the triple and long jumps with with several solid efforts during the current outdoor season. "We have the potential to do some really good things," McMahon said. "We'll just have to see how everything unfolds."

St. Olaf
Coach: Bill Thornton (35th season)

2007 Championships Finish: Tied 6th

St. Olaf Athletes to Watch
Isaac Tut (Fy., Northfield, Minn.)
Cullen O'Neill (Jr., Northfield, Minn.)
Doboul Ruon (Fy., Northfield, Minn.)
David Swanson (Sr., Eden Prairie, Minn.)
John Schantzen (So., Lake Elmo, Minn./Stillwater)
Ryan Doyle (Jr., Duluth, Minn./East)

St. Olaf Championships Preview
St. Olaf will look to a young group of sprinters in this years' MIAC championships, including first-years Isaac Tut and Adrian Hawkins, and sophomore Dan Monroe. Cullen O'Neill, David Green, and Doboul Ruon have led St. Olaf in mid-distance this year, excelling in the 800 and 1500 meter runs, and contributing to strong relay teams. In distance events, senior David Swanson has been strong in both the 5000 and 10,000 meter runs this season. The Oles could also look to first-year Jonathan Lambert in the longer distances. In the field events, shot putter John Schantzen currently leads the MIAC with a throw of 15.76m at the Carleton Relays. Bobby Anderson is another MIAC leader in the high jump, jumping 1.92 meters at the SJU Invitational, and is also a strong competitor in the triple jump. Junior Ryan Doyle, a decathlete, also joins Anderson as one to watch in the high jump.

St. Thomas
Coach: Steve Mathre (13th season)

2007 Championships Finish: 2nd

St. Thomas Athletes to Watch

Matt Boumeester (Jr., Oakdale, Minn./Tartan)

James Ewer (Jr., Lakeville, Minn.)

Derek Marks (Sr., Lakeville, Minn.)

Brian Sames (Jr., Shakopee, Minn.)

P.J. Theisen (Sr., Elko, Minn./New Prague)

St. Thomas Championships Preview

St. Thomas has won the MIAC indoor team championship all 24 seasons it has been held. The Toms have captured the conference outdoor team title 21 of the last 25 seasons.

Another St. Thomas-St. John's battle for the championship is expected in the May 9-10 outdoor competition hosted by Hamline. At the March indoor meet, UST topped runner-up St. John's (114.5) by 121 points -- the biggest winning margin in 10 seasons. Hamline took third with 90. But the Johnnies, who always ramp up for the outdoor season, have solid depth and are strong in the distance races, the jumps and the decathlon.

On the 2008 MIAC outdoor performance lists, the Tommies come into May ranked first in seven events and ranked second in eight events.

Senior All-American P.J. Theisen missed last year's MIAC outdoor with an injury. He will contend in the 110 and 400 hurdles, the long jump and triple jump, as well as the 4x400 relay. Theisen has 28 career top-5 MIAC meet places (13 firsts in relay or individual events) and has scored a remarkable 201 career individual points in his seven MIAC meets (indoors and outdoors) and helped UST win six of a possible seven team championships.

Junior All-American James Ewer has competed in five career MIAC meets and has nine firsts and seven seconds.

Senior All-American Derek Marks will contend in the discus, where he ranks sixth in the nation, and the hammer.

Senior Mark O'Connell will also look to score well in the hammer, discus and shot put.

Junior All-American Brian Sames and junior Matt Boumeester will challenge in the 800, 1,500 and 4x800 relay.