

2008 MIAC Men's Tennis Season Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. -- The 2008 MIAC Men's Tennis season will feature some of the top teams and student-athletes in the region and in the nation. Teams will compete throughout the spring with the goal of reaching the 2008 MIAC Playoffs. Gustavus will once again be favorite to win the regular season championship, but Carleton, St. Thomas, and Saint John's should also have competitive teams.

The 2008 MIAC Men's Tennis Playoffs will take place April 25-26 on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn.

2008 MIAC Men's Tennis Preseason Coaches' Poll

- 1. Gustavus (8)
- 2. Carleton (2)
- 3. St. Thomas
- 4. Saint John's
- 5. Bethel
- 6. St. Olaf
- 7. Macalester
- 8. Saint Mary's
- 9. Concordia
- 10. Hamline

Bethel

Coach: Dan Morton (9th season)
2007 Finish: 3rd (10-8, 6-3 MIAC)

Bethel Athletes to Watch
Chris Scheevel (Sr., St. Cloud, Minn./Cathedral)
Tom Ronning (So., Alexandria, Minn./Jefferson)
David Torres (Jr., Arden Hills, Minn./Mounds View)
Jordan LeFebvre (So., Roseville, Minn./Roseville)

Bethel Season Preview
Last season the Royals surprised many by finishing third behind perennial MIAC tennis powerhouses Gustavus and Carleton at 6-3 in conference play and 10-8 overall. Head Coach Dan Morton was awarded MIAC Coach of the Year for the turnaround. Prior to last season, Bethel had not finished any higher than second to last place since 1999 when they came in fourth. The Royals made it as far as the MIAC semifinals before being ousted by Carleton.
The bar is now set higher for the 2008 season as the Royals only graduated two seniors from last year's team while hanging on to their All-MIAC #1 singles player and captain Chris Scheevel (Sr., St. Cloud, Minn.) who hopes to improve on a 10-8 overall record from a year ago. Bethel also picked up a strong #2 singles player in Tom Ronning (So.,Alexandria, Minn.).
Coach Morton believes that although Bethel still has a young team, with the experience they gained last year, they will be poised and ready to face the challenges the new season brings. Bethel will field three very good doubles teams this season consisting of Scheevel and Ronning (Edina, Minn.), All-MIAC doubles player David Torres (Jr., Arden Hills, Minn.) and Jordan LeFebvre (So., Roseville, Minn.), as well as Joel Cassens (So., Owatanna, Minn.) and Alex Zabel (Jr., Edina, Minn.). With Scheevel being the Royals only senior on the roster, Bethel will have a chance to gain experience as well as have strong talent for years to come. Over the past couple seasons, the team has learned that consistency is the key to on court success, and has matured the team's play and improved their results. The Royals hope to play to their full potential this season as they work to the MIAC tournament the last weekend of April.

Carleton

Coach: Stephan Zweifel (11th season)
2007 Finish: 2nd (20-3, 8-1 MIAC)

Carleton Athletes to Watch

Colin Russell (So., The Woodlands, Texas/Oak Ridge)
Kartheek Koneru (Sr., Naperville, Ill./Neuqua Valley)
Winston Park (So., Encino, CA/Harvard-Westlake)
Peter Varnum (Sr., Lake Quivira, Kan./Shawnee Mission Northwest)
Brendan Cooper (Sr., San Anselmo, Calif./Sir Francis Drake)
Julian Tokarev (Jr., Shoreview, Minn./Mounds View)

Carleton Season Preview
Carleton's Men Tennis program looks to improve upon a 20-3 record last year as the Knights return their top eight players from a year ago. Those players accounted for eight all-conference honors last year. Seniors Kartheek Koneru and Brendan Cooper earned all-conference in both singles and doubles. Colin Russell and Winston Park earned their honors in singles, while Julian Tokarev and Peter Varnum got their distinction in doubles. The Knights are so deep that they even have a former All-MIAC performer outside of the top six in Eirik Thoen. The Knights played so exceedingly well in the MIAC last year that Winston Park's (two losses) was the only player to suffer more than one loss in singles action.
Sophomore Colin Russell compiled a 19-6 record as freshman playing mostly second singles. He enters the spring season ranked 11th in the Central region. Russell partnered up with Winston Park, who also had tremendous success as a freshman, for a record of 13-2 at the second doubles position. Park primarily played the first position as a freshman. He did an exceptional job on his way to a 14-8 record overall. Seniors Brendan Cooper and Kartheek Koneru look to continue their extremely high level of play. Koneru looks to earn All-MIAC honors for a fourth time.

Concordia
Coach: Troy Hanestad (2nd season)
2007 Finish: Tied 4th (8-8, 5-4 MIAC)

Concordia Athlete to Watch

Concordia Season Preview

The 2008 Concordia men's tennis team will have an entirely new look. Gone from the team are three of the top four singles players that spent four years as a starter for the Cobbers. That group includes last year's conference Arthur Ashe award-winner Jordy Kamerling who was the squad's No.1 singles player for two straight seasons. He also anchored the team by being the emotional leader and part of the No.1 doubles team for four straight years.

Senior Wills Wischer (Grand Forks, N.D./Red River HS) will be the new team leader for the Cobbers. He has spent the past two years as the team's No.2 singles player and as part of the top two doubles teams. Over his first three seasons he has won 28 singles matches and has teamed with doubles partners to capture 24 victories. His ability to cover ground and his outstanding reach will help Wischer at No.1 singles as well as helping whoever head coach Troy Hanestad decides to partner with Wischer on the No.1 doubles team.

After Wischer, Concordia will need several freshman and untested players to step to the forefront if they are going to finish in the top five at the MIAC playoffs for the fourth straight season. The other top returning player for Concordia will be sophomore Kirby Johnson (Crookston, Minn.). Last year he was the team's No.5 singles player and will be asked to move up two spots in the order. Besides Johnson, three of the other four top singles spots will be held by freshmen. Matt Edin (Staples, Minn./Staples-Motley HS) was an all-conference player in high school and participated in the Minnesota State High School Tournament in 2007. He will more than likely be the Cobbers' No.2 singles player. Joining Edin will be fellow first-year players Jordan Swanson (Thief River Falls, Lincoln HS) and Peter Zender (Litchfield, Minn.). Swanson is extremely athletic and has a tremendous upside, while Zender participated in the Minnesota State High School Tournament in 2007 while playing for tennis-rich Litchfield.

Hanestad will earn his paycheck in putting the doubles lineup together. The Cobbers will not have an experienced doubles team back from last season and the early part of the season could see growing pains for Concordia's doubles partnerships.

One thing Concordia will have going for it in 2008 is a return to taking a trip over spring break. The Cobbers will also play 10 matches before the first of March which should help all the new players get acclimated to collegiate tennis. If CC can find the right lineup early in the season, and the freshmen can learn quickly from the top-heavy schedule, then the Cobbers could be knocking on the door of another MIAC playoff appearance.

Gustavus

Coach: Steve Wilkinson (39th season)

2007 Finish: 1st (27-10, 9-0 MIAC)

Gustavus Athletes to Watch

Andy Bryan (Sr., Edina, Minn.)

John Kauss (Jr., St. Paul, Minn./Harding)

Mike Burdakin (Jr., Bettendorf, Iowa)

Gustavus Season Preview

The Gustavus men's tennis team begins the 2008 season with optimism as Coach Steve Wilkinson returns four of his top six singles players and five of his top six doubles players from a squad that finished fourth at last year's NCAA Championship and posted a record of 27-10 overall.

This past fall senior Andy Bryan won the ITA Midwest Region singles title and finished second at the ITA Small College Championships in Mobile, Alabama. Bryan also teamed with junior Charlie Paukert to win the ITA Midwest Region doubles title and finish fourth at the Small College Championships. Bryan will play #1 singles, while Paukert will play #5 singles. Other top returners for Gustavus include junior John Kauss at #2 singles and #2 doubles, junior Mike Burdakin at #3 singles and #2 doubles, junior Ben Tomasek at #5 singles and #3 doubles, and junior Aaron Zenner at #6 singles.

The Gusties, who will be looking to claim their 20th consecutive conference title, begin the season ranked #5 in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association Division III poll. Gustavus has been selected to host the 2008 MIAC Post-Season Tournament on April 25-26.

Hamline

Coach: Jon Henning (1st season)

2007 Finish: 8th (8-10, 3-6 MIAC)

Hamline Athletes to Watch

N/A

Hamline Season Preview

N/A

Macalester

Coach: Jason Muhl (4th season)

2007 Finish: 10th (7-10, 0-9 MIAC)

Macalester Athletes to Watch

Brad Goldstein (Sr., Tucson, Ariz. / Catalina Foothills)

Aaron Heerboth (Sr., Tucson, Ariz. / Catalina Foothills)

Charlie Edelman (Jr., Tucson, Ariz. / University)

Macalester Season Preview

The 2008 Macalester Scots are a good mixture of experienced leadership and talented newcomers, and are looking to show that they will be a much-improved squad this spring. The Scots were 7-10 overall last season but could not break into the win column in the MIAC standings.

Macalester will be led by three veterans from Tucson, Ariz., who provided plenty of experience. Brad Goldstein (Sr., Catalina Foothills H.S.) received all-conference recognition. Goldstein went a team-best 12-5 overall and 5-4 in MIAC play at No. 1 singles. Aaron Heerboth (Jr., Catalina Foothills H.S.) played No. 1 for the Scots for two years before giving that spot up to Goldstein last season. Edelman posted a 9-4 record in '07 at third singles.

Most of the rest of the lineup is young, but talented, including frosh Paul Mairer (Rochester, Minn. / Century), Justin Margolies (Madison, Wis. / West) and Michael Coleman (Westlake Village, Calif. / Agoura), as well as Titus Levy (So., New York, N.Y. / Fieldston School), who went 8-9 last year at No. 4.

Saint John's

Coach: Jack Bowe (11th season)

2007 Finish: Tied 4th (11-9, 5-4 MIAC)

Saint John's Athletes to Watch

- Trevor Beach (Sr., Grand Rapids, Mich.)

Dan Ruehl (Sr., Excelsior, Minn./Minnetonka)

Mark Steelman (Jr., St. Paul, Minn./Holy Angels)

Dutch Hansen (So., Dawson, Minn./Dawson-Boyd)

Saint John's Season Preview

The Saint John's University tennis team looks to improve upon its fourth-place finish from last season's performance in the MIAC. With three new members joining the team this 2008 season, SJU expects a stronger season from the group.

Leading the team for the second consecutive season are senior captains Trevor Beach (Grand Rapids, Mich.) and Dan Ruehl (Excelsior, Minn./Minnetonka). Last season, Beach earned All-MIAC honors in singles competition and was named to the All-MIAC Sportsmanship team. Ruehl earned All-MIAC honors in doubles competition last season.

Junior Mark Steelman (St. Paul, Minn./Holy Angels) and sophomore Dutch Hansen (Dawson, Minn./Dawson-Boyd) are expected to continue improving this season. Steelman was 14-6 in singles and 6-2 in doubles last season, including a win in the MIAC Quarterfinals last year. Hansen was 2-3 in singles and 8-3 in doubles last season.

Head coach Jack Bowe expects to see great work from the three incoming freshman, in particular Elliot Elm (Eagan, Minn./Eagan). Bowe says that Elm "will work his way [in to the team] and see a lot of action this season." Bowe also expects to see great improvement in freshmen Justin Edin (Staples, Minn./Staples-Motley) and Pat Fortman (Stillwater, Minn./Stillwater Area).

Bowe believes this year will come down to competing against St. Thomas and Bethel for a spot at the championship tournament.

Saint John's will compete in its usual nine MIAC matches along with nine nonconference contests this spring. The first match of the season is scheduled for Jan. 26 against Wis.-Whitewater at Gold's Gym in Sartell.

The Johnnies will again call three different locations home in 2008 (Gold's Gym in Sartell and the SJU Tennis Courts and Donald McNeely Spectrum in Collegeville). During their annual spring break trip, the Johnnies are scheduled to play matches in Hilton Head, S.C. for a second consecutive season.

The MIAC Championship will take place on April 25-26 in St. Peter, Minn.

Bowe begins his 11th season at Saint John's in 2008 with a 50-41 MIAC record and 102-98 overall career record. Bowe was named the MIAC Coach of the Year in 2003.

Saint Mary's

Coach: Jeff Halberg (10th season)

2007 Finish: 9th (7-16, 1-8 MIAC)

Saint Mary's Athletes to Watch

Walter Mannino (Sr., Chicago, Ill.)

Tom Vollman (Sr., Oak Park, Ill.)

Steve Grundhoefer (So., St. Paul, Minn.)

Pawel Szczepkaowski (Fr., Opolskie, Poland)

Saint Mary's Season Preview

Saint Mary's University men's tennis coach Jeff Halberg heard rumblings that he may have a diamond in the rough when school began in late August.

He got his first glimpse of what Pawel Szczepkowski (Opolskie, Poland) could do when he competed at the Gustavus Midwest Open in September.

He liked what he saw.

And he could hardly wait for the official season to begin.

On Sunday, Halberg's wait is over.

And the Szczepkowski Era can officially begin.

"Pawel played at a very high level in Poland. He's a very talented player who seems to have all the tools," said Halberg, whose men's squad kicks off its season with a Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference match against Carleton on Saturday. "We didn't know anything about him coming in — he just decided to come to Saint Mary's and play tennis.

"It's one of those unexpected gifts."

And a perfect compliment to returning senior Walter Mannino (Chicago, Ill.) and last year's No. 1 and No. 2 Tom Vollman (Oak Park, Ill.) and Steve Grundhoefer (St. Paul, Minn.) — giving the Cardinals one of their most potent 1-2-3-4 punches ever.

"We've had some pretty good No. 1-2 singles combinations in the past few years but this year we have the luxury of a really good 1-2-3-4 lineup," Halberg said. "We're going to be strong at (Nos.) 1 and 2, and with the depth that we possess, that's going to be a huge boost."

St. Olaf

Coach: Scott Nesbit (18th season)
2007 Finish: Tied 6th (4-6, 4-5 MIAC)

St. Olaf Athletes to Watch
Eric Brandenburg (Sr.)
Erik Brekke (Sr.)
Patrick Curran (Sr.)
Drew Erie (Sr.)

St. Olaf Season Preview
The St. Olaf men's tennis team has eight returners from last year's campaign, hoping to make a run for the MIAC play-offs this season.
"All the players with the exception of two have extensive MIAC and collegiate tennis playing experience. Considering this, we are hopeful to finish in the top six teams in the MIAC and make the play-offs," says head coach Scott Nesbit in his 19th season.
Four seniors will lead the way for the Oles, Eric Brandenburg, Erik Brekke, Patrick Curran, and Drew Erie. Erie and junior David Narvaez, along with juniors Ian Pray and Nick Crnkovich return in doubles action from last year. Sophomore Joe McDevitt also returns from last year's squad. Nick Hubbard-Peters (sophomore) and David Shiell (first-year) also hope to make an impact this season.
The men won their first match of the season against Macalester, 5-4 at the Owatonna Tennis Club. Next up for the Oles is against Luther College in Rochester on February 23.

St. Thomas

Coach: Terry Peck (18th season)
2007 Finish: Tied 6th (8-10, 4-5 MIAC)

St. Thomas Athletes to Watch

Ben Herding (Sr., Hastings, Minn.)

Kevin Manzel (Sr., Dubuque, Iowa/Wahlert)

Joshua Tomashek (Sr., Rochester, Minn.)

Arya Vayghan (Fy., North Oaks/Mounds View)

Tyler Rice (Fy., North Oaks/Mounds View)

St. Thomas Season Preview

Head coach Terry Peck is beginning his 18th season at St. Thomas, and his teams are consistent top-five MIAC finishers and ranked among the best in the region. Peck will coach his 500th match with the Tommies in February 2008. He comes into 2008 with a combined men's and women's dual record of 369-126 (.746 win%).

Over the last 10 seasons, the UST men have had five seconds and three thirds in the conference standings, and an overall dual record of 135-53.

The 2007 Tommie men's tennis team overcame injuries and close losses. St. Thomas won four consecutive conference matches in April to reach the six-team MIAC playoffs. But UST lost 6-3 to third-seed Bethel in the conference tournament in St. Peter. The Tommies' 8-10 record included two 5-4 defeats, a loss to Division II Winona State, and defeats to Division III powers Gustavus, Carleton and Luther.

The Toms return a pair of senior All-MIAC honorees -- Joshua Tomashek for singles, and Ben Herding and Tomashek in doubles. Coach Peck may have as many as five freshmen in his lineup, led by three players from the Mounds View state AA runner-up team -- Arya Vayghan, Tyler Rice and Max Keswani. Vayghan went 4-1 in last fall's 2007 ITA Tennis singles competition in a field of 128 players from Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin. The fifth-seed Vayghan lost a close match in Sunday's semifinals to Gustie All-American and top-seed Andy Bryan, the eventual champion. Rice was state Class AA doubles champ last spring for Mounds View.