

2016 MIAC Men's Tennis Preview and Preseason Coaches' Poll

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2016 MIAC Men's Tennis Conference Preview

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. -- The tennis courts around the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) are about to spring to life for the 2016 MIAC men's season and, yet again, the new campaign begins with extremely familiar questions. Can Gustavus Adolphus College continue its quarter-century of dominance, or is this the year one of the challengers finally ends the Gusties' reign?

Gustavus continued its impressive run of unprecedented MIAC success in 2015 with its 27th-straight regular-season conference championship. The title was No. 44 overall for the Gusties, with no other conference school claiming more than 10 titles. Head Coach Tommy Valentini's squad also won its fifth-straight MIAC Playoff title, and finished with a 19-11 overall record, a perfect 9-0 mark in conference play, and an 11-0 record against MIAC opponents.

Carleton also had an incredible season in 2016 with a 23-3 overall record. The Knights were the runners-up in both the regular season with an 8-1 record, and in the MIAC Playoffs with a loss to Gustavus in the championship match. Two of Carleton's three losses came at the hands of the Gusties. St. Olaf finished 7-2 in conference play (8-5 overall) to take third, and St. Thomas joined the top four with a 6-3 MIAC record and an 11-6 overall mark.

Macalester and Saint Mary's shared fifth place in the MIAC standings with identical 4-5 conference records, but the Scots (9-9 overall) grabbed the final spot in the MIAC Playoffs thanks its 5-4 regular-season win over the Cardinals (14-7 overall). Bethel (11-10 overall) and Saint John's (8-10 overall) were also just on the outside looking in at the postseason, as they two tied at 3-6, just a game behind Macalester and Saint Mary's. Hamline (1-8 MIAC, 8-10 overall) and Concordia (0-9 MIAC, 0-13 overall) rounded out the 2015 MIAC standings.

The 2016 season is already under way for a few teams, with the rest to make their debuts in the coming weeks, so fans don't have long to wait to see how everything plays out. Can Gustavus make it 28-straight titles? Will Carleton or another contender finally ascend to the Gusties' level? Which five teams will earn a trip to the MIAC Playoffs, and who will hoist the postseason trophy? It's going to be an exciting three months on tennis courts across the MIAC.

THE POLLS ARE IN

The MIAC coaches don't expect a changing of the guard this year, as they picked Gustavus as the unanimous favorite to win yet another conference title and continue the streak at 28 title in a row. The Gusties received nine first place votes in a system where coaches can't vote for their own team, and 81 total points to sit atop the poll. Carleton - fresh off its 23-win season - was again identified as the top contender to Gustavus' throne with the other first-place vote and 72 total points.

St. Thomas received the No. 3 spot in the poll with 66 points, and St. Olaf was 10 points behind the Johnnies in fourth place with 56 points. The coaches expect Macalester to barely grab the final MIAC Playoff spot once again by a slim margin, with the Scots in fifth with 43 points and Saint John's in sixth, just two points behind Macalester with 41 points.

Bethel was predicted to edge Saint Mary's for seventh place, as the Royals received just four more points than the Cardinals, 33-to-29. Concordia is expected to move up a spot to No. 9 with 17 points in the 2016 poll, with Hamline occupying the final spot with 12 points.

PLAYERS TO WATCH

In their quest for a 28th-straight title, Gustavus has to replace decorated graduates Motasem Alhouni and Brad Entwistle, but the MIAC's dominant program certainly appears poised to keep rolling thanks to the talent coming back. Andres Saenz is a returning All-MIAC senior ready to lead, and star sophomore Mohanad Alhouni is ready to build on his All-American rookie campaign. Fellow sophomore Zach Ekstein is also back and ready for a strong spring after a breakout fall campaign.

The Knights graduated MIAC Arthur Ashe Award winner Andrew Hwang, but Stephan Zweifel has many key pieces back from last season's 23-3 squad. Senior Erik Johnson is back to lead after All-MIAC doubles honors in 2015, and junior Patton McClelland returns after earning All-MIAC singles honors as a sophomore. Sophomore Kevin Mei will return to the top of the Carleton lineup after his outstanding rookie season in 2015.

St. Thomas brings back its entire lineup from 2015 with a trio of All-MIAC players back to lead the way. Senior Brady Radermacher is a three-time All-Conference honoree, and juniors Burke Anderson and Luke Elifson also bring All-MIAC experience to the Tommie lineup. St. Olaf graduated Stephen Nolan, but has All-MIAC seniors Joey Kronzer and Ben Carlson back in the fold, and sophomore Christian Beck returns after contributing as a rookie.



Macalester has each of its top three singles players back from last season's MIAC Playoff run, led by All-MIAC senior Brian Utz. Sophomores Josh Doyle (All-Conference) and Aidan Tirpack also return for the Scots in 2016. Saint John's has nearly its entire lineup back this season as well, led by two-time All-MIAC pick Jack Hansen and fellow All-Conference senior Ben Lahren. Sophomore Tim Larson also returns after earning All-Conference honors in both singles and doubles play as a rookie.

Bethel has the benefit of its top three players all back atop the lineup, all with multiple All-Conference honors in their careers. Juniors Matt Schull and Kolin Kiekhoefer and senior Luke Palmquist lead the Royals as they aim for a Playoff spot. Saint Mary's will again be led by All-MIAC doubles senior Collin Kaczorowski, and sophomore Brett Giesen is back after winning 16 singles matches as a rookie.

Concordia hopes to improve on its 2015 finish with its full lineup back this season, with sophomore Isaac Toivonen returning after earning All-MIAC singles honors as a rookie, and junior Jesse Schneeberger also returns after winning four of his last five matches to end 2015. Hamline also has its entire lineup back intact and will be led by a pair of All-MIAC juniors in David Yanaghita at No. 1 singles and Cody Jahrig at No. 3 singles.

CIRCLE THESE DATES

Fortunately for fans, the anticipation is over. The spring season actually began officially on Jan. 29, and the first MIAC contest of the season - an 8-1 win for Carleton over Saint Mary's - followed on the next day. Things really begin in earnest Saturday and Sunday, with numerous teams opening their season. Despite Mother Nature's winter influence on Minnesota this week, the MIAC teams will take to the indoor courts around the areas and embark on trips to warmer locales to complete a significant number of matches in February and March.

However, the bulk of the conference season will be played in April. Each Saturday in April features ample conference matches. Hopefully, knock on wood, spring has sprung by then and the big questions surrounding the MIAC championship and five MIAC Playoff spots can be answered on the outdoor courts around the league. April 2, 9, 16, and 23 are four of the busiest days for league play, with mid-week matches also prevalent throughout the month.

The final regular-season matches are set for Saturday, April 30, at which time the regular-season champ will be crowned and the conference will announce the five-team Playoff field. The tournament will take place with two quarterfinal matches on Wednesday, May 4, two semifinal matches on Friday, May 6, and the championship on Sunday, May 8. The winner of the MIAC Playoffs will receive the conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Division III Men's Tennis Tournament.

A CLOSER LOOK

The rest of the 2016 MIAC Men's Tennis Preview contains complete results from the 2016Preseason Coaches' Poll, MIAC Playoff details, helpful links and a preview for each team submitted by their sports information director. The MIAC web site - www.miacathletics.com - will be an outstanding source for MIAC men's tennis news, schedules, scores, stats and more throughout the 2016 season.

Visit the [MIAC scoreboard](#) on game days to follow all the action, and download the [MIAC mobile app](#) to have all the information with you anywhere you travel. Also, connect to the conference on its [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) pages for updates and interaction all season long.

2016 MIAC Men's Tennis Preseason Coaches' Poll

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

2016 MIAC Men's Tennis Preseason Coaches' Poll		
Rank	Institution	Total
1.	Gustavus (9)	81
2.	Carleton (1)	72
3.	St. Thomas	66
4.	St. Olaf	56
5.	Macalester	43
6.	Saint John's	41
7.	Bethel	33
8.	Saint Mary's	29
9.	Concordia	17
10.	Hamline	12

2016 MIAC Men's Tennis Playoffs

The 2016 MIAC Men's Tennis Playoffs won't have any significant changes for the first time in three years. The field will include the top five teams in the conference standings, squaring off in a single-elimination, high-seed host tournament. The No. 4 and 5 seeds will square off on May 4 in the quarterfinals, with the winner joining the top three seeds in the semifinals on May 6. The championship match will be held

May 8 on the home court of the top remaining seed. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2016 NCAA Division III Men's Tennis Tournament.

| [2016 MIAC Men's Tennis Playoffs Web site](#) |

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BETHEL | [Royals' men's tennis home page](#) |

Head coach

- Drew Fernelius (Fourth season)

A Year Ago

- 3-6 MIAC (7th place) | 11-10 Overall

Top Returners

- Matt Schull (No. 1 Singles, Jr | Two-time MIAC All-Conference in Singles and Doubles)
- Kolin Kiekhoefer (No. 2 Singles, Jr | Two-time MIAC All-Conference in Singles and 2014 All-Conference Doubles)
- Luke Palmquist (No. 3 Singles, Sr | 2015 MIAC All-Conference Doubles, 2014 MIAC All-Conference Singles)

Key Losses

- Blake Watts (No. 5 Singles | 13-8 singles record, 2-4 doubles record)

By the Numbers

- 4: Returning No.1 and No. 2 singles players Matt Schull and Kolin Kiekhoefer are a perfect 4-for-4 in All-Conference Awards through their first two seasons with the Royals. Both were named to the 2014 and 2015 MIAC All-Conference Singles and Doubles teams.
- 5: Bethel freshman Hunter Fernelius, the son of head coach Drew Fernelius, won 5 matches in a row in the Midwest Draw of the ITA this fall before falling on day 3 in the semi-finals. His wins included consecutive 3-set come from behind marathon wins in the round of 16 and quarterfinals to advance further than any Royal since Tucker Morris in 2009.
- 97: Returning No. 4 singles player Jakob Bartels spent his fall as the MIAC leader in saves as a goalkeeper for the Bethel University soccer team. Bartels made an MIAC leading 97 saves and even scored a goal for the Royals last fall.

Did You Know?

- The Royals will play seven matches in the middle of the season between March 13th and 17th in Orlando, Florida during spring break. The Royals opponents in Orlando come from all over the country and even include NCAA DII opponent Franklin Pierce University.

Off the Court

- Bethel captain and No. 1 singles player Matt Schull spent the month of January studying-abroad in Israel, calling it "A life changing experience that I would recommend to anyone!"



CARLETON | [Knights' men's tennis home page](#) |

Head coach

- Stephan Zweifel (18th season)

A Year Ago

- 8-1 MIAC (2nd place) | 22-3 Overall

In the 2015 Postseason

- MIAC postseason results (semifinals — def. St. Olaf, 6-3; finals — lost to Gustavus, 5-0)

Top Returners

- Erik Johnson (Sr. | All-MIAC in doubles for 2014 and 2015)
- Patton McClelland (Jr. | All-MIAC in singles for 2015; went 20-2 in singles)
- Kevin Mei (So. | went a combined 16-5 at first and second singles; also won 10 matches at second doubles)

Key Losses

- Andrew Hwang (All-MIAC in singles and doubles for 2015; MIAC's Arthur Ashe Award winner; went 16-4 in singles and won 13 doubles matches)
- Mauricio Gonzalez (won 10 singles matches and 9 doubles matches in 2015)

- Paul Elbow (went a combined 9-1 in singles and doubles matches last season, including an undefeated ledger in conference matches)

By the Numbers

- 13: Carleton has finished among the conference's top two teams for 13 consecutive seasons.
- 22: The 2015 squad broke the school record for victories during the regular season (22-2).
- 240: Since the start of the 2001-02 campaign, Carleton has posted a 263-78 overall record for a .771 winning percentage.

Did You Know?

- Head coach Stephan Zweifel is a geneticist and molecular biologist who serves as chair of the Biology Department at Carleton. He teaches Genetics, Molecular Biology, part of Introductory Biology, and a seminar on Behavioral Genetics.

Off the Court

- The Knights were named an All-Academic Team by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) last year, marking the 12th time since 2002 that the Knights have been recognized for their academic excellence. Additionally, seven players picked up individual recognition last season, equaling the program record established the year before.



CONCORDIA | [Cobbers' men's tennis home page](#) |

Head coach

- Steve Futchko (Third season)

A Year Ago

- 0-10 MIAC (10th place) | 0-13 Overall

Top Returners

- Isaac Toivonen (So., | 2015 MIAC All-Conference Singles; 6-4 at #1 singles in MIAC play in 2015)
- Jesse Schneeberger (Jr., | Won four of his final five singles matches in 2015 at #4 singles)

Key Losses

- None

By the Numbers

- 1: Concordia senior Zach Zitun is the only player in the MIAC whose first and last names both start with the letter "Z".
- 5: Concordia returns five of its six starting players from 2015
- 17: The Cobbers have lost 17 straight matches

Did You Know?

- Concordia junior Matthew Engum has changed his major five different times.



GUSTAVUS | [Gusties' men's tennis home page](#) |

Head coach

- Tommy Valentini (Seventh Season)

A Year Ago

- 10-0 MIAC (First place) | 20-11 Overall

In the 2015 Postseason

- Defeated St. Thomas 5-0 in MIAC Playoff Semifinals, defeated Carleton 5-0 in MIAC Playoff Final, their fifth straight
- Defeated UW-Whitewater 5-1 in NCAA Regional Semifinal, fell to University of Chicago 5-2 in NCAA Regional Final

Top Returners

- Mohanad Alhouni (So., Tripoli, Libya) All-American...All-Conference singles and doubles honoree as first-year...Went 20-7 in singles (8-3 at No. 1) and 22-7 in doubles...Earned 2015 USTA/ITA Midwest Regional Singles Title this past fall to advance to USTA/ITA National Small College National Tournament...Took fourth place at 2015 USTA/ITA National Small College National Tournament
- Andres Saenz (Sr., Cancun, Mexico) All-Conference singles and doubles honoree...Went 20-9 in singles and 27-9 in doubles...Advanced to NCAA Doubles Quarterfinals with partner Motasem Alhouni...2015 USTA/ITA Midwest Regional Doubles Runner-up with partner Mohanad Alhouni this past fall.
- Zach Ekstein (So., Eagan, Minn.) Went 16-8 in singles and 8-3 in doubles...Advanced to 2015 USTA/ITA Midwest Regional Semifinals in both singles and doubles this past fall.

Key Losses

- Motasem Alhouni (Tripoli, Libya) All-Conference singles and doubles honoree...Went 21-12 in singles and 27-9 in doubles...Advanced to NCAA Doubles Quarterfinals with partner Andres Saenz.
- Brad Entwistle (Sioux Falls, S.D.) All-Conference singles and doubles honoree...Went 16-12 in singles and 22-8 in doubles.

By the Numbers

- 1988: The last year Gustavus did not win the MIAC Regular Season Title.
- 98: The number of all-time All-Americans Gustavus has had, including 2015 honoree Mohanad Alhouni.

Did You Know?

- Eleven of Gustavus' 24 scheduled matches will take place outside the state of Minnesota this spring.

Off the Court

- The United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) recently named its College Coach-of-the-Year Award the "Steve Wilkinson Collegiate Coach of the Year Award," after the late longtime Gustavus Adolphus College men's tennis coach. Wilkinson, who coached the Golden Gusties from 1971-2009, compiled a 929-279 overall and 334-1 conference record during his coaching tenure, which included winning 36 MIAC championships and two NCAA Division III titles (1980 and 1982).



HAMLIN | [Pipers' men's tennis home page](#) |

Head coach

- Jon Henning (9th season)

A Year Ago

- 1-8 MIAC (10th place) | 8-10 Overall

Top Returners

- David Yanaghita (Jr., No. 1 singles player, 10-8 in doubles with Cody Jahrig, All-MIAC pick)
- Cody Jahrig (Jr., 8-9 at No. 3 singles, 10-8 doubles with Yanaghita, All-MIAC pick)

Key Losses

- None

By the Numbers

- 1: freshman on 2016 roster
- 8: wins last year equaled totaled for two previous seasons combined
- 11: returning players from 2015 team

Did You Know?

- The Pipers will face Nichols College at Nick Bolleteri's prestigious IMG Academy in Florida in March.

Off the Court

- Cody Jahrig returns to the team after spending time in China doing health studies and clinical observation as part of an internship.

MACALESTER | [Scots' men's tennis home page](#) |



Head coach

- Jason Muhl (12th season)

A Year Ago

- 4-5 MIAC (5th place) | 9-9 Overall

In the 2015 Postseason

- Fell to St. Thomas, 6-3 in the MIAC quarterfinals

Top Returners

- Brian Utz (Senior | 7-6 at no. 1 singles last year and 4-0 at no. 2 singles, named to the 2015 All-MIAC team, went 13-7 overall last season)
- Josh Doyle (Sophomore | Named to the 2015 All-MIAC team in both singles and doubles, went 16-4 overall in singles last season moving from no. 2 singles to no. 1 singles to end the year with 4 wins)
- Aidan Tirpack (Sophomore | no. three singles player, posted an 11-7 record on the season and was 6-3 in conference play)

Key Losses

- Sam Naden (posted an 8-9 record in singles play and a 6-10 mark in doubles play. He split time between the no. 4 and 5 singles spots)
- Perry Campbell (played mainly at no. 6 singles compiling a 10-7 overall record and went 4-3 overall at no. 3 doubles)

By the Numbers

- 12: Josh Doyle completed his freshman season by winning twelve of his final 13 matches.
- 7: Macalester's roster represents players from seven states and one foreign country
- 4: Macalester had four players receive academic all-conference honors last year

Did You Know?

- Head coach Jason Muhl was named the Steve Wilkinson Co-Coach of the Year last year for the third time in his career. He was named MIAC women's coach of the year in 2008 and the men's coach of the year in 2010.

Off the Court

- The Macalester men's tennis team was awarded the 2014-15 Academic Team of the Year at the annual MAC Student-Athlete banquet. This award honors the top male and female team that achieve the highest cumulative grade point average.

SAINT JOHN'S | [Johnnies' men's tennis home page](#) |



Head coach

- Jack Bowe (19th season)

A Year Ago

- 3-6 MIAC (T-7th place) | 9-10 Overall

Top Returners

- Jack Hansen (Sr. | Two-time All-MIAC in singles play... finished the 2015 season with a 9-9 (6-3 MIAC) record at No. 1, 11-10 overall...also went 9-9 (3-6 MIAC) at No. 1 doubles)
- Ben Lahren (Sr. | 2015 All-MIAC in doubles competition...accumulated a 14-4 doubles record and a 9-6 (4-5 MIAC) mark in singles play last season)
- Tim Larson (So. | Earned 2015 All-MIAC honors in both singles and doubles play...posted an 8-9 (4-5 MIAC) record at No. 2 singles and went 13-6 in doubles competition, including a 10-2 (8-1 MIAC) record at No. 2 with Lahren)

Key Losses

- Steven Wirtz (Totaled a 9-8 record (4-3 MIAC) in singles action and 6-11 (2-5 MIAC) in doubles play last spring)

By the Numbers

- 4/5: Four of the Johnnies' first five matches will be played on their home indoor court, at Fitness Evolution in Sartell.
- 3/4: Three of SJU's last four regular-season matches will be played outdoors on the other home courts located at the College of Saint Benedict.
- 5: The number of senior Johnnies on the roster this year. The last time the Johnnies had five or more seniors on the squad was back in 2010 (5).

Did You Know?

- The 2016 season is head coach Jack Bowe's 19th at SJU. Before coming to SJU, Bowe was the head tennis coach at Saint Benedict for seven years and as the head men's tennis coach at St. Cloud State for five years prior to that stop.

Off the Court

- The 2015 SJU tennis team and four of its student-athletes received academic honors from the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA). The eight-man SJU tennis team combined to record a 3.35 GPA during the 2014-15 academic year, surpassing the 3.2 requirement, to earn the ITA All-Academic Team award. Four individuals achieved ITA Scholar-Athlete status: Lahren, Larson, Wirtz and Jordan Otto '15. In order to earn ITA Scholar-Athlete status, a player must be a varsity letter winner, have a grade-point average of 3.50 or better for the current academic year and have been enrolled at the present institution for at least two semesters.

SAINT MARY'S | [Cardinals' men's tennis home page](#) |



Head coach

- Jeff Halberg (18th season)

A Year Ago

- 4-5 MIAC (6th place) | 14-7 Overall

Top Returners

- Collin Kaczorowski (5-6, 125, Sr., Suamico, Wis. | First-Team All-MIAC (doubles) in 2015. ... 11-11 in singles, 18-4 in doubles in 2015. ... Has now posted 45 singles wins in first three seasons | Owns Saint Mary's single-season record with 20 singles wins)
- Brett Giesen (6-5, 190, So., Cato, Wis. | 16-7 in singles play, 6-9 in doubles in 2015. ... 16 singles wins were second on team)

By The Numbers

- 4: Collin Kaczorowski (Suamico, Wis.) enters his senior season in 2016 ranked fourth in program history in both singles (45) and doubles (46) wins.
- 13-10-10-9: The Cardinals put together three extensive singles winning streaks a year ago. Brett Giesen (Cato, Wis.) strung 13 consecutive singles wins together, while Tim Wolford (Maple Grove, Minn.) and Brenden Amiotte (Rapid City, S.D.) won 10 straight, and Alex Holm (Red Wing, Minn.) owned a nine-match win streak.
- 10: Saint Mary's went 10-2 vs. non-MIAC foes in 2015. The Cardinals own a 21-4 record against nonconference opponents over the past two seasons, and are 34-7 in nonconference action over the past three years.

Did You Know?

- The Cardinals put together a season-high 11-match winning streak—the longest in Coach Jeff Halberg's 17 years at the helm.

Off The Court

- Warren Lawrenz (Rochester, Minn.) represented the Cardinals on the Academic All-MIAC team a year ago.



ST. OLAF | [Oles' men's tennis home page](#) |

Head coach

- Scott Nesbit (26th season)

A Year Ago

- 7-2 MIAC (3rd place) | 8-5 Overall

In the 2014 Postseason

- MIAC postseason results - Lost in semifinals to Carleton

Top Returners

- Joey Kronzer (Sr. | Was All-MIAC... Went 8-5 overall, including a 3-2 mark at the No. 1 singles spot in 2014-15...)
- Ben Carlson (Sr. | All-MIAC in 2014-15... Was 9-4 overall... Was 8-4 at No. 3 and 1-0 at No. 2.)
- Christian Beck (So. | Went 3-2 as a first year)

Key Losses

- Stephen Nolan (Was All-MIAC... went 2-6 at No. 1 and 3-1 at No. 2)
-



ST. THOMAS | [Tommies' men's tennis home page](#) |

Head coach

- Terry Peck (25th season)

A Year Ago

- 6-3 MIAC (4th place) | 11-6 Overall

In the 2015 Postseason

- MIAC postseason results (1-1; def. Macalester 6-3, lost to Gustavus 5-0)

Top Returners

- Brady Radermacher (SR, 3X All-MIAC; Career: 21-22 singles, 29-11 doubles)
- Burke Anderson (JR, 2X All-MIAC; Career: 18-12 singles, 20-12 doubles)
- Luke Elifson (JR, All-MIAC; Career: 10-6 singles, 8-8 doubles)

Key Losses

- None

By the Numbers

- 20: National doubles ranking for Luke Ellifson and Scott Wall
- 25: Years Terry Peck has coached Tommie men's tennis
- 2: National- or regional-ranked teams (St. Cloud State, Gustavus) to open the Toms' 2016 schedule

Did You Know?

- The Toms' fall 2015 season was highlighted by a 6-3 win over the University of Minnesota club team.

Off the Court

- Allen-Michael Muench and Scott Wall received Academic All-MIAC honors last spring.
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[MIAC Men's Tennis Home Page](#)