

2017 MIAC Men's Tennis Preview and Preseason Coaches' Poll

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2017 MIAC Men's Tennis Conference Preview

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – The Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) men's tennis season is ready to serve up another exciting campaign. The 2017 season starts with a familiar favorite, as Gustavus Adolphus College looks to continue one of the conference's most impressive dynasties. The Gusties are aiming for a 29th-straight MIAC title, while the rest of the league hopes to finally make a change at the top just shy of three decades of Gustavus dominance.

A year ago, the Gusties once again rolled to a perfect 9-0 conference record for consecutive title No. 28, and then Gustavus rattled off two more wins in the MIAC Playoffs to add that title as well. Head Coach Tommy Valentini's team finished 25-8 overall and was the runner-up at the NCAA regional tournament.

Carleton and St. Thomas were the Gusties' top challengers a year ago. The Knights rattled off an 8-1 MIAC record and went 17-8 overall, with the Tommies also in the conference's top three with a 7-2 conference mark and an 11-4 overall record. After that there was a three-way tie for fourth as Macalester, Saint John's and Bethel each finished 5-4 in the conference. By virtue of tiebreakers, the Scots (10-9 overall) and Johnnies (10-9 overall) grabbed the final two MIAC Playoff spots, while Bethel just missed out despite an outstanding 19-5 overall record.

St. Olaf finished .500 overall at 8-8 and took seventh in the MIAC with a 3-6 conference record. Concordia (2-11, 2-7 MIAC) was eighth, and Saint Mary's (9-12, 1-8 MIAC) and Hamline (7-13, 0-9 MIAC) rounded out the 2016 standings.

The 2017 season begins with optimism around the league. With Gustavus gunning for a 29th-straight conference crown, nine other teams hoping to end that run, and five bids to the MIAC Playoffs up for grabs, there's certainly an exciting season ahead.

COACHES CAST THEIR VOTES

The MIAC coaches unanimously think Gustavus is the prohibitive favorite to win consecutive MIAC title No. 29, as the Gusties stood alone atop the 2017 MIAC Men's Tennis Preseason Coaches' Poll. Gustavus received nine first-place votes and 81 points to lead the predictions. The Gusties have plenty of star power back in St. Peter, led by junior All-American Mohanad Alhouni, who was the 2016 ITA Midwest Regional Singles Champion. Sophomore teammate Patrick Whaling was the Midwest Regional runner-up to Alhouni, and junior Zach Ekstein also returns after earning both singles and doubles All-MIAC honors a year ago.

Carleton received the other first-place vote and 70 points to finish second in the poll, and once again the Knights are expected to be Gustavus' top contender. The Knights have a strong, veteran lineup, behind All-Conference performers Patton McClelland and Kevin Mei. Newcomer Sahil Chhugani is also expected to make big contributions in his first season.

St. Thomas was right behind Carleton in third place in the preseason poll, just three points back with a total of 67. The Tommies have a talented, senior-laden lineup led by Burke Anderson, Luke Elifson and Scott Wall, who have all earned multiple All-MIAC honors in their careers. The coaches expect Saint John's to return to the playoffs, as the Johnnies received 47 points in the poll to finish fourth. Junior Tim Larson returns to lead SJU, and hopes are high for sophomores Ryan Meger and Jonah Punnoose after each had breakout rookie campaigns.

Just a point behind Saint John's in the coaches' poll was Bethel with 46 points to round out the top five, and the five expected Playoff teams. The Royals are led by three-time All-Conference standouts Matt Schull and Kolin Kiekhoefer and sophomore Hunter Fernelius who earned All-MIAC singles honors as a freshman. Macalester received 41 points in the poll to finish sixth, as the Scots hope to return to the Playoffs as well. Two-time All-MIAC junior Josh Doyle is back to lead Macalester, and junior Aidan Tirpack and sophomore Peter Willenborg are also back in the Scots' lineup.

St. Olaf received 39 points in the poll to finish seventh, just two points behind Macalester. A pair of All-MIAC juniors return to lead the Oles in 2017, as Christian Beck was an All-MIAC singles pick, and Danny Hogan earned doubles honors. Concordia finished eighth in the poll, as the Cobbers received 25 points. Concordia welcomes new Head Coach Joseph Murrey, who has his top two singles players back in juniors Isaac Toivonen and David Schneck, and three-year starter Jesse Schneeberger also returns.



Saint Mary's (21 points) and Hamline (13 points) rounded out the final two spots in the preseason predictions. The Cardinals have a junior-heavy lineup in 2017, led by Brett Giesen, Brenden Amiotte and Alex Holm, who all won at least nine singles matches a year ago. The Pipers have new leadership in Head Coach Julia Courter, who has some talented upperclassmen back in David Yanagita, Matt Seracki and Gabriel Guarin.

A CLOSER LOOK

The rest of the 2017 MIAC Men's Tennis Preview contains complete results from the 2017 Preseason 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 2017 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.

2017 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.

2017 MIAC Men's Tennis Preseason Coaches' Poll

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Total</u>
1.	Gustavus (9)	81
2.	Carleton (1)	70
3.	St. Thomas	67
4.	Sant John's	47
5.	Bethel	46
6.	Macalester	41
7.	St. Olaf	39
8.	Concordia	25
9.	Saint Mary's	21
10.	Hamline	13

2017 MIAC Men's Tennis Playoffs

The 2017 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 2 in the quarterfinals, with the winner joining the top three seeds in the semifinals on May 4. The championship match will be held May 6 on the home court of the top remaining seed. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2017 NCAA Division III Men's Tennis Tournament.

| [2017 MIAC Men's Tennis Playoffs Web site](#) |

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Team-by-Team Previews

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

- Drew Fernelius (5th season)

A Year Ago

- 5-4 MIAC (t-4th place) | 19-5 Overall

In the 2016 Postseason

- Did not qualify, lost out to Macalester & Saint John's in three-way tie for fourth place

Players to Watch

- Matt Schull (Sr | Three-time MIAC All-Conference in Singles and Doubles)
- Kolin Kiekhoefer (Sr | Three-time MIAC All-Conference in Singles and 2014 All-Conference Doubles)
- Hunter Fernelius (So | 2016 MIAC All-Conference Singles, 2016 Midwest Open Doubles Champion with Henry Morris)

Did You Know?

- Four of Bethel's tennis players (Cash Rodemaker, Peter Watchler, Peter Lindberg and Henry Morris) help make up one of Bethel's top intramural basketball teams.



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

Head coach

- Stephan Zweifel (19th season)

A Year Ago

- 8-1 MIAC (2nd place) | 17-8 Overall

In the 2016 Postseason

- MIAC postseason results (semifinals — def. St. Thomas, 6-2; finals — lost to Gustavus, 5-0)

Players to Watch

- Kevin Mei (Jr. | All-MIAC in singles in 2016; totaled 11 wins at first singles last season, the most wins by a Knight at any individual spot in the singles lineup)
- Patton McClelland (Sr. | All-MIAC in singles in 2015 and 2016; paced the Knights with 16 singles victories overall last season, including an 8-1 ledger in MIAC matches.)
- Sahil Chhugani (Fy. | worked his way into the singles and doubles lineup as a rookie; advanced to the third round of the ITA Midwest Regional last fall)

Did You Know?

- Carleton went 17-8 last season and finished among the MIAC's top two squads for the 14th consecutive season.



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

Head coach

- Joseph Murrey (1st Season)

A Year Ago

- 2-7 MIAC (8th place) | 2-11 Overall

Players to Watch

- Isaac Toivonen (Jr. | 2-year No.1 singles; 2015 MIAC All-Conference)
- David Schneck (Jr. | No.2 singles player in 2016)
- Jesse Schneeberger (Sr. | Three-year starter for the Cobbers)

Did You Know?

- The Cobbers have five freshmen on this year's roster which is the most since the 2014 season.



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

Head coach

- Tommy Valentini (8th season)

A Year Ago

- 9-0 MIAC (1st place) | 25-8 Overall

In the 2016 Postseason

- Central Regional runner-up. Defeated Coe College 5-2 before falling to No. 8 University of Chicago 5-2.

Players to Watch

- Mohanad Alhouni (Jr. | 2016 ITA All-American, 2015 & 2016 MIAC All-Conference Singles/Doubles Team, 2016 ITA Midwest Regional Singles Champion)
- Patrick Whaling (So. | 2016 ITA Midwest Regional Singles runner-up)
- Zach Ekstein (Jr. | 2016 MIAC All-Conference Singles and Doubles Team)

Did You Know?

- Gustavus hosted the 2016 ITA Midwest Regionals and Midwest Open. The Midwest Regional wrapped up with an All-Gustie singles final.

Doubles teammates Mohanad Alhouni and Patrick Whaling competed for the singles championship with Alhouni prevailing by scores of 6-2, 6-2.



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

Head coach

- Julia Courter (1st season)

A Year Ago

- 0-9 MIAC (10th place) | 7-13 Overall

Players to Watch

- David Yanagita (Sr., 10-8 in No. 1 doubles last year, 3 year regular)
- Matt Seracki (Jr., won one match at ITA event last fall)
- Gabriel Guarin (Jr., 7-6 in No. 3 doubles last year)

Did You Know?

- New head coach Julia Courter is one of just four female head coaches of a men's team in the MIAC.

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



Head coach

- Jason Muhl (12th season)

A Year Ago

- 5-4 MIAC (5th place) | 10-9 Overall

Players to Watch

- Josh Doyle (Jr. | 2-time All-MIAC; 13-6, 7-2 MIAC at No. 1 singles in 2016)
- Aidan Tirpack (Jr. | 7-9, 4-5 MIAC at No. 3 singles in 2016)
- Peter Willenborg (So. | 7-6, 5-4 MIAC at No. 6 singles as a first year)

Did You Know?

- The Scots must replace last year's Arthur Ashe winner Brian Utz, who was 14-8 overall in singles play last year.

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



Head coach

- Jack Bowe (20th season)

A Year Ago

- 5-4 MIAC (T-Fourth place) | 10-9 Overall

In the 2016 Postseason

- W, 6-3 vs. Macalester in MIAC Quarterfinals; L, 0-9 at Gustavus Adolphus in MIAC Semifinals

Players to Watch

- Tim Larson (Jr. | Recorded the most wins in conference play at No. 2 singles and was one of only three tennis student-athletes in the MIAC to appear in all nine league matches and post eight wins or more with an 8-1 record (14-6 overall) last spring...two-time All-MIAC in both doubles and singles...finished second at the 2016 Aquatennial Tennis Classic)
- Ryan Meger (So. | Went 11-9 (4-3 MIAC) in singles as a freshman last spring...posted a 12-8 record (6-3 MIAC) with classmate Jonah Punnoose at doubles)
- Jonah Punnoose (So. | Tallied a 12-3 record (3-1 MIAC) in singles competition, as well as the aforementioned 12-8 mark (6-3 MIAC) with Meger in doubles play)

Did You Know?

- SJU freshman Jess Hansen (Dawson, Minn./Dawson-Boyd) is the fourth Hansen brother to play tennis for the Johnnies: Dutch '10 (21-23 overall/9-11 MIAC at singles); Ian '12 (46-31 overall/20-16 MIAC at singles); and Jack '16 (33-50 overall/17-19 MIAC at singles). All three earned All-MIAC honors.

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



Head coach

- Jeff Halberg (19th season)

A Year Ago

- 1-8 MIAC (9th place) | 9-12 Overall

Players to Watch

- Brett Giesen (6-5, 190, Jr., Cato, Wis. | 10 singles wins and 10 doubles wins in 2016. ... Shared team lead in singles wins and was fourth in doubles victories last season)
- Brenden Amiotte (5-10, 185, Jr., Rapid City, S.D. | 10 singles wins and 11 doubles victories in 2016. ... Shared team lead in singles wins and was third in doubles victories last season).
- Alex Holm (5-10, 160, Jr., Red Wing, Minn. | Finished 2016 with nine singles wins, one back of team lead. ... Shared the team lead in doubles wins in 2016 with 13—including a 4-1 record at the Gustavus Fall Invitational).

Did You Know?

- Warren Lawrenz (Rochester, Minn.), Brenden Amiotte (Rapid City, S.D.), and Brett Giesen (Cato, Wis.) shared the team lead with 10 overall singles wins last season.



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

Head coach

- Scott Nesbit (27th season)

A Year Ago

- 3-6 MIAC (7th place) | 8-8 Overall

Players to Watch

- Christian Beck (Jr. | All-MIAC singles in 2015-16... 10-3 from No. 3 spot... Was 12-3 in doubles.)
- Danny Hogan (Jr. | All-MIAC doubles in 2015-16... Was 5-3 in doubles)



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

Head coach

- Terry Peck (26th season)

A Year Ago

- 7-2 MIAC (3rd place) | 11-4 Overall

In the 2016 Postseason

- Fell to Carleton 6-2 in the MIAC Playoff semifinals

Players to Watch

- Burke Anderson (Sr. | 2X All-MIAC, Career: 25-20 singles, 30-18 doubles)
- Luke Elifson (Sr. | All-America, 2X All-MIAC, Career: 25-10 singles, 25-15 doubles)
- Scott Wall (Sr. | 3X All-MIAC, Career: 32-14 singles, 30-18 doubles)

Did You Know?

- Junior Martin Beck played two years at UW-Whitewater before transferring to St. Thomas and winning the 2016 Fall ITA Midwest doubles tourney with Luke Elifson to receive All-America honors.

[MIAC Men's Tennis Home Page](#)