

# 2019 MIAC Men's Tennis Preview & Preseason Coaches' Poll

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**BLOOMINGTON, Minn.** – The 2019 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) men's tennis season is set to begin this weekend, but before teams take the court, league coaches submitted their ballots for the annual Preseason Coaches Poll. The balloting was as tight as any year in recent memory, with Gustavus narrowly edging out Carleton for the top spot in the Poll by just two points.

Gustavus received six first-place votes and 78 points in the Preseason Poll and will enter the 2019 season having won an unprecedented 30 consecutive regular season conference championships and each of the last eight MIAC Playoff crowns. The Gusties sit at No. 8 in the nation and No. 2 in the Central Region in the latest Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) rankings. Though the team will be challenged to replace five-time All-America honoree and last season's ITA Senior of the Year, Mohanad Alhouni, Gustavus will have the services of **Patrick Whaling** (Manikin Sabot, Va. | Victoria Christian Academy) and **Chase Johnson** (Golden Valley, Minn. | Hopkins) - who rank nationally at 23rd and 24th, respectively, in singles play and No. 3 overall as a doubles tandem in the most recent ITA rankings. The team of **Yassine Derbani** (Casablanca, Morocco | Lycee Lyautey) and **Nick Aney** (Rochester, Minn. | Century) is also ranked No. 13 in the nation.

Carleton collected the other four first-place votes in the Coaches' Poll to come up two points shy of the conference-favorite Gusties. The Knights are ranked No. 37 in the nation and No. 8 in the Central Region to open 2019. Rising sophomore **Leo Vithoontien** (Fy. | Bangkok, Thailand | Bangkok Patana School) became the first Carleton men's tennis player to receive All-America status since 1989 when he advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament in his debut season last year. He was also named ITA Central Region Rookie of the Year for his exceptional play. Vithoontien will open 2019 ranked No. 15 in the nation in singles action and No. 19 in doubles play with partner **Jordon O'Kelly** (Lake Forest, Ill.).

Macalester received 57 points in the Preseason Poll to come in at No. 3. The Scots locked down the four seed in last year's MIAC Playoffs, advancing to the semifinal round before being knocked out by top-seeded Gustavus. **Sam Hochberger** (Maple Grove, Minn.) went 12-6 in his first season of collegiate competition in 2018 and is poised for more success in his sophomore campaign, which began with a pair of wins in the ITA Midwest Regional last fall.

Saint John's was one point behind the Scots in the preseason balloting to earn the No. 4 spot. The Johnnies have become a mainstay in the MIAC Playoffs, having reached the postseason each of the last three years and six of the last seven. **Thomas Gillach** (Lindstrom, Minn. | Chisago Lakes) is back for his sophomore season after earning All-MIAC honors in both singles and doubles play last season. Gillach - who claimed the Johnnies' lone victory against nationally-ranked Carleton in last season's MIAC Semifinals - began his second season in Collegeville with a doubles win alongside fellow sophomore **Nate Jordre** (St. Cloud, Minn. | Tech) at last fall's ITA Regional.

Bethel collected 45 points to come in at No. 5 in the Preseason Coaches' Poll. The Royals finished the 2018 season on a high note with a pair of wins over conference foes and have appeared to carry that momentum into the new year. Evidence of that is senior **Hunter Fernelius** (New Hope, Minn. | Armstrong), who was seeded No. 6 overall out of 128 competitors at the ITA Midwest Regional - the highest individual seeding in the history of BU men's tennis - and lived up to the billing, winning three rounds following an opening round bye before falling in a marathon match in the round of 16.

St. Thomas logged 42 points to lock down fifth place in the Coaches Poll. The Tommies will be looking to bounce back from a tough 3-6 season in conference play last year. Key to the rebounding effort will be sophomore **Nick Vossen** (Lakeville, Minn. | North), who went 8-3 at the No. 3 singles spot as a freshman last season. Vossen was one of three first-year players in the Tommies' lineup last season.

Hamline received 37 points in the balloting to come in at No. 6. Despite an 0-9 record in MIAC play a year ago, things are clearly on the upswing at HU. **Jake Trondson** (St. Paul, Minn. | Mounds View) has already made a name for himself ahead of his junior campaign by becoming the Pipers' first-ever All-America honoree in tennis when he won the ITA Midwest Regional singles championship last fall. Trondson will open the 2019 season ranked No. 11 in the nation.

St. Olaf notched 25 points in the Preseason Coaches' Poll, good for the No. 7 spot. Senior **Christopher Prokosch** (Mendota Heights, Minn. | Henry Sibley) was undefeated at Nos. 4 and 6 singles last season and won his opening round match at the ITA Midwest Regional Championships last fall. Prokosch and partner **Spencer Wick** (Stillwater, Minn. | Mahtomedi) also reached the second round of the ITA Regionals in doubles play, collecting an 8-4 first round victory.



*Patrick Whaling is nationally ranked as both a singles and doubles competitor to start the 2019 season.*

Concordia was not far behind the Oles with 23 points, coming in at No. 8 in the Poll. The Cobbers will be looking to prove that 2018 was no fluke. Concordia went 5-4 in MIAC matches and clinched its first MIAC Playoff berth since 2011 last year. The team will look to build on the success of last season under the guidance of former Concordia competitor **Zach Zitun**, who was named head coach of both the men's and women's programs last August. **Erik Porter** (Mandan, N.D.) finished his sophomore season with a trifecta of MIAC awards, being named All-Conference in both singles and doubles play, in addition to landing a spot on the All-Sportsmanship Team. The rising junior went 5-4 in league play at No. 2 singles and won four of his last five singles bouts against conference opponents in 2018.

Saint Mary's received 10 points in the Preseason Coaches' Poll to place No. 9. **Bobby Tiedemann** (Euclid, Minn. | Crookston) led the team with 10 singles wins in 2018 and has led or shared the team lead in each of his first two seasons. Tiedemann played in all 18 matches last season and put together a team- and career-high six-match singles winning streak as a sophomore last year.

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### **Complete 2019 Preseason Coaches' Poll**

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (9 for first, 8 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.

#### **2019 MIAC Men's Tennis Preseason Coaches' Poll**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Institution (First-Place Votes)</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.	Gustavus (6)	78
2.	Carleton (4)	76
3.	Macalester	57
4.	Saint John's	56
5.	Bethel	45
6.	St. Thomas	42
7.	Hamline	37
8.	St. Olaf	25
9.	Concordia	23
10.	Saint Mary's	10

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### **2019 MIAC Men's Tennis Playoffs**

The 2019 MIAC Men's Tennis Playoffs 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 April 30 in the quarterfinals, with the winner joining the top three seeds in the semifinals on May 2. The championship match will be held May 4 on the home court of the top remaining seed. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2019 NCAA Division III Men's Tennis Tournament.