

2008 MIAC Men's Cross Country Championship Preview

10/27/2008 11:46:42 AM

St. Paul, Minn. – The 2008 MIAC Men's Cross Country Championships could shape up to be one of the most exciting and closest races in recent history. Five MIAC teams enter Saturday's Championship ranked in the USTFCCCA Central Region's top eight, but the six other teams also could easily pose threats to crack the upper half of the conference. The MIAC Championships will be held Saturday, November 1 at Como Golf Course in St. Paul, Minn. The men's race will begin at 2 p.m., with the women's race following at 3 p.m.



Five different teams have won the last six MIAC Men's Cross Country titles, making it one of the sports with the most parity in the entire conference. Saint John's enters the 2008 Championships as the two-time defending champion. The Johnnies lost the top two finishers in last season's championships to graduation, but return a talented team. St. Thomas will contend for the top spot after finishing seventh last year. The Tommies enter the race as the #1 ranked team in the region and feature a deep roster.

St. Olaf is ranked second in the region and features a blend of senior leadership and youthful talent. The Oles finished fourth last fall, but are having a strong 2008 season. Also ranked in the region are Bethel and Hamline, at sixth and eighth respectively. Both the Royals and Pipers are led by a pair of star runners, but if either of the teams can have strong finishes in the three through five spots, they could challenge for the team title.

While the regional rankings provide some indicator of who is having a successful fall, most know that anything can happen at the MIAC Championships. Carleton, Gustavus, and Macalester traditionally have strong programs and should be able to compete with the ranked teams. Augsburg, Saint Mary's, and Concordia all have talented runners and if they can find some depth, each team could be a dark-horse on Saturday.

The individual race may be just as competitive as the team race this season. The only runners returning who finished in the top eight last season are Bethel runner's Dan Greeno (3rd) and Carl Gladitsch (7th). Hamline junior Ian Bauer (9th), Macalester senior Martin Mudry (12th), and Saint John's senior Zach Hunter (14th) are the other returning All-MIAC runners. So far in 2008, Concordia sophomore Tom Sederquist, St. Olaf sophomore Doboul Ruon, and Augsburg junior Brent Haglund along with Greeno and Mudry have been awarded MIAC Athlete of the Week honors.

2008 MIAC Cross Country Championship Website

St. Thomas is planning to produce a live webcast of Saturday's MIAC Men's and Women's Championships, starting at approximately 1:45 p.m. Besides audio, some live highlights and results will be posted as they become available. Go to www.mnsportsnetwork.com and scroll to the MIAC CC channel.

Augsburg

Coach: Dennis Barker (15th season)

2007 Championship Finish: 9th

Augsburg Championship Preview

The Augsburg men's cross team, under the direction of veteran head coach Dennis Barker, is looking to move up a spot or two in this season's MIAC standings. The Auggies finished 9th at last season's championships are counting on a strong junior class to anchor a young Augsburg squad.

Co-captain **Brent Haglund** (JR, Fridley, Minn.) has led the Auggies all season, finishing in the top five in every race he has competed in thus far. Haglund set two personal-best times this season and is currently the Augsburg school record holder over the 8,000 meter distance with a 25:15.27, which he set at the Wisconsin-Eau Claire Invitational earlier this season. Haglund, who earned MIAC Athlete of the Week honors on Sept. 15th for his performance at the Tufts Invite where he established a new course record, has his sights set on earning All-MIAC honors in 2008.

Victor Sanchez (JR, Minneapolis, Minn./Southwest HS) has been the most improved runner in the Auggie lineup this season. Sanchez has consistently been the Auggies number two runner this season, cutting more than three minutes off his personal-best time from a year ago. Sanchez also has goals of bringing home All-MIAC honors at this year's conference meet as the Auggies attempt to have two All-Conference runners for the first time in more than a decade.

Fellow co-captain **Shane Wyborny** (JR, Detroit Lakes, Minn.) has consistently been in the top five for the Auggies all season and will be looking to peak at the conference meet. Newcomer **Brian Byrnes** (FY, Marshall, Minn.) has also been a top five runner for the Auggies this season but will not be competing at the conference meet in order to attend his sister's wedding. Augsburg will look to **Ben Rodriguez** (FY, Buffalo, Minn.) and a strong group of underclassmen to step up in his place. Rodriguez has been battling injuries for most of the season but has run very competitively in the few races he has competed in thus far.

The young Augsburg squad has seen nearly every single team member record a personal-best time this season and plans to use that momentum at this weekend's Championships to move up in the conference standings.

Bethel

Coach: Jim Timp (12th season)

2007 Championship Finish: 6th

Bethel Championship Preview

The 2008 Bethel Royals look to build upon the success they achieved at last year's conference meet when they placed 6th overall. They were led by All-Conference runners Dan Greeno (Jr., St. Michael, Minn.) and Carl Gladitsch (Sr., Bloomer, Wis.), who both went on to become Bethel's very first NCAA All-American runners by virtue of placing in the top 35 at the national meet.

So far this season, Greeno has been one of the many keys to Bethel's success, placing first at the prestigious 23rd Annual Roy Griak Invitational at the University of Minnesota, and then again at the Hanover Pre-National meet in Hanover, Ind. He also placed fourth out of 494 runners at the Brooks Invitational, hosted by UW-Oshkosh, and has smashed his own school record time in the 8k. As a team, the Royals have been ranked as high as 34th nationally, and as high as fourth regionally during the season.

In addition to Greeno, there is good depth and talent returning along with outstanding leadership. Gladitsch will also be a runner to watch at this year's conference meet, as well as Tyler Hinrichs (Sr., Clara City, Minn.). Other runners that will be important team contributors include Jordan Groh (Sr., Rockford, Ill.), and Austin Hinrichs (So., Clara City, Minn.). There are also a number of outstanding freshman on board to round out the team including Sam Greeno (St. Michael, Minn.), who is Dan's brother, J.P. Cartier (Mora, Minn.) and Joel McDougall (Minneapolis) - all with high school state meet experience.

With this talent and depth, Coach Timp is excited about the potential his team has. "I think we're going to peak at the right time. Dan and Carl have both been remarkable, and now that Tyler is healthy, we're in good shape to make a run at one of the top three spots in the conference meet," said Timp.

Carleton

Coach: Dave Ricks (2nd season)

2007 Championship Finish: 2nd

Carleton Championship Preview

A young Carleton squad will look to replicate the success of last year's team that finished second at the 2007 MIAC championships. Gone from that team are five seniors, but the 2008 Knights are led by junior Charlie Gamble (San Diego, Calif./La Jolla), who placed 20th at last year's meet.

Gamble and sophomore John Davis (Eden Prairie, Minn.) have been Carleton's top racers this fall. They placed in the top 25 at both the Les Duke Invite and the Roy Griak Invitational early in the season. Most recently the pair finished third and fourth respectively at the Running of the Cows (aka the Carleton Invitational) on October 18.

Senior Meeks Brucker (Elkins Park, Pa./Cheltenham Township) also returns from last year's team that qualified for the NCAA Championships.

Blake Hansen (Jr./Seattle, Wash./Lakeside); Chris Marshall (Jr./Plymouth, Minn./Robbinsdale Armstrong) and Colin Sinclair (So./Madison, Wis./West) are among the other Knights expected to turn in solid performances at this season's conference championship.

Carleton has finished among the top three teams at the last six MIAC Championships.

Concordia

Coach: Garrick Larson (12th season)

2007 Championship Finish: 11th

Concordia Championship Preview

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| <p>The Concordia men's cross country team will enter the 2008 MIAC Championship Meet after one of the most successful seasons in recent history. The Cobbers are coming off their first team title in over 15 years and their top runner has won three straight races entering the conference championship.</p> <p>Concordia won the Crown College Invite on Oct. 18 to capture their first multi-meet championship since head coach Garrick Larson took control of the program in 1997. At the Crown Invite, Concordia placed seven runners in the top 15 of the race. Sophomore Tom Sederquist (Moorhead, Minn.) earned the individual title at the meet and has now won three straight races. Sederquist started his run to success at the UND Invite and then went on to win the Jimmie Invitational hosted by Jamestown College before finishing off his trifecta of wins at the Crown meet. Sederquist was the first Cobber to win a multi-team race since 1991 when Jason Trichler won the MIAC Championship.</p> <p>Sederquist will not be a one-person team at the MIAC Meet. Concordia has had several other solid performances turned in by their No.2, 3 and 4 runners. Sophomore Michael Dunn (Fargo, N.D./Oak Grove HS) has established himself as the team's No.2 athlete. He has had a breakout season that started at the Black Hills Invite on Sept. 13 and since then has posted three straight top 20 finishes. Like Dunn, Mike Reponen (Jr., Baxter, Minn./Brainerd HS) has also had a coming out party in 2008. He has back-to-back top 12 finishes entering the conference meet. Perhaps the biggest surprise of the entire conference has been sophomore Nelson Godbolt (Whitehall, Mont.) who was not on the team to start the year and only joined the squad after being discovered in a physical education class. Godbolt has only run in two meets and has a pair of top 20 finishes. He is coming off an eighth-place finish at the Crown Invite.</p> <p>Concordia will be hoping to finish off the 2008 season in the same fashion they have posted successful results from the first meet of the year.</p> |
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Gustavus

Coach: Jed Friedrich (5th season)

2007 Championship Finish: 5th

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| <p>Gustavus Championship Preview</p> <p>The Gustavus men's cross country team returns five of its top seven runners from a team that finished fifth at last year's MIAC Championships and Coach Jed Friedrich is hoping that nucleus will help the Gusties post another top five finish in 2008.</p> <p>Senior Dan Foley (Minneapolis, Minn./South) has been the top Gustavus finisher in each of his four races this fall and he is expected to make a big improvement on his 42nd place finish at the conference meet a year ago. Foley will be supported by fellow co-captain John Leaf (Center City, Minn./Chisago). Leaf, who finished 22nd at the conference meet last year, has been recovering from a leg injury much of the season and Coach Friedrich is hoping that he will be at full strength for this year's conference meet. A couple of juniors, Mark Hartmann (White Bear Lake, Minn.) and John Kennedy (Coon Rapids, Minn.) have been the #2 and #3 runners, respectively all season. Hartmann placed 62nd and Kennedy finished 70th at last year's conference meet. If this duo can move into the top 40 at this year's meet, the Gusties have a very good chance of finishing in the top five again.</p> <p>Senior Alex Prieve (Faribault, Minn.), who has been the team's #5 runner this fall, turned in a solid 49th position at the MIAC meet in 2007, and he will be shooting for another top 50 finish this year. Sophomore Nick Ross (Hasting, Minn.) has finished in the top seven for the squad in each meet this fall with a season best 60th place finish at the Wartburg Invitational. Ross placed 112th at last year's conference meet. The Gusties will likely be battling Bethel, Carleton, and Macalester for a chance to finish in the top five.</p> |
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Hamline

Coach: Paul Schmaedeke (21st season)

2007 Championship Finish: 3rd

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| <p>Hamline Championship Preview</p> |
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The Hamline University men's cross country team heads into the 2008 MIAC Championships looking to improve up on a third place performance in 2007. Paul Schmaedeke's Pipers will be led by the legs of senior Brandon Gleason (Mantorville, Minn.) and junior Ian Bauer (Roseville, Minn.), to whom he will be looking to lead not only Hamline but also the MIAC across the finish line.

Although Gleason and Bauer are expected to lead Hamline, look to the Pipers to keep with what they have proven works - racing together to the top. At the 2007 MIAC Championships, all of the Pipers that scored in the points finished within two minutes of each other, with the top two crossing almost simultaneously.

Gleason returned to the cross country courses this fall after missing the 2007 season following serious injuries sustained in a training accident in February of that year. Upon making his return to the Piper track team less than a year after the accident, he qualified for the NCAA Indoor Nationals in the 5,000 meter race, and was the MIAC indoor champion in the 3,000 meter race and the MIAC outdoor champion in the 1,500 meter run.

Joining Gleason at the front of the Piper pack will be Bauer, who has followed up a great summer training program with a successful 2008 fall to head into the championships. Bauer's season has included an eighth place finish at the Roy Griak Invitational - an improvement of 16 places over his 2007 finish in that same race. Bauer was also the first Piper to cross the line in 2007, finishing ninth at the championships.

Adding quality depth to the Piper running core at the championships will be senior Kevin Groh (Austin, Minn.), junior Jamison Hull (Forest Lake, Minn.) and sophomore Ian Campbell (Blooming Prairie, Minn.). These three runners have shown a marked improvement over last year's performances and added maturity to their approach to their races.

Groh will be looking to make his final cross country season memorable and improve upon his 18th place finish in 2007. He and the other veterans on the team will be helping to guide a key Piper newcomer who will be looking to join the scoring pack, first-year Ellis Richardson (Shoreview, Minn.). Early in the season, Richardson joined Gleason, Bauer and Groh in the top 40 at the Les Duke Invite, and will be looking to help the Pipers return the MIAC cross country championship to Hamline.

Macalester

Coach: Matt Haugen (6th season)

2007 Championship Finish: 8th

Macalester Championship Preview

Macalester features a pair of the MIAC's top individual contenders in all-conference runner Martin Mudry (Sr., University Heights, Ohio / University School) and Wade Ekstrom (Jr., La Crescent, Minn.). Mudry and Ekstrom are looking to lead the Scots up in the standings after an eighth-place team finish a year ago.

Mudry, who was selected MIAC men's cross country athlete of the week after placing 11th - third best among Division III runners - at the Jim Drews Invitational. He was also eighth at the St. Olaf Invitational, 10th at the Roy Griak Invitational and third at the Eau Claire Blugold Invite, and comes into the MIAC meet as one of the leading contenders for a top-five finish. Ekstrom's best race was a fifth-place effort at the Blugold Invitational where both he and Mudry moved into the top-five on the school's all-time honor roll. Ekstrom was also 21st at the Jim Drews and 12th at the St. Olaf meet.

If the Scots are able to move up in the standings, they will need big races from their next three finishers. Likely candidates to fill those spots include Franz Meyer (Sr., Kirkwood, Mo.), Carl Biggers (Fy., Verona, Wis.), Jon Bassen (So. Shorewood, Wis.).

Saint John's

Coach: Tim Miles (30th season)

2007 Championship Finish: 1st

Saint John's Championship Preview

The Saint John’s University cross country team finished last season with an impressive resume that included a 13th-place finish at the NCAA Division III national championship, a third-place finish at the NCAA Central Regional meet and its second consecutive Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) championship. Although the cross country team lost five runners that participated at the national meet, returners such as senior Zach Hunter (Billings, Mont.) and juniors Patrick Lowder (Chanhassen, Minn./Chaska) and Ryan Noack (St. Cloud, Minn./Cathedral) have varsity experience and will look to improve on last year’s success.

The returning upperclassmen will be expected to bring experience to a young Johnnie team. Hunter placed 106th (26:03) at the national meet, and Noack came in 155th (26:23). Hunter also finished 14th (26:10) at the MIAC Championship while Lowder placed 31st (26:55). Head coach Tim Miles also has high expectations for senior Mitch Gesell (Alexandria, Minn.), junior Andrew Stevens (Stillwater, Minn.) and sophomores Jimmy Backes (Lakeville, Minn./South) and Dustin Franta (La Crescent, Minn.).

Miles will need to replace Chris Erichsen, Kelly Fermoye, Cam Green, Brady King and Darren Larsen, who all graduated last spring. All five runners were part of the Johnnies’ success story last fall. Erichsen (24:44) and Fermoye (25:37) finished first and second, respectively, at the MIAC meet. Erichsen then finished second at the NCAA championship with a time of 24:40. He was also named the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches’ Association’s (USTFCCCA) NCAA Division III Cross Country All-Academic Athlete of the Year and Central Region Athlete of the Year award, as well as the MIAC cross country Athlete of the Year.

Miles begins his 30th season as head cross country coach at Saint John’s. During his tenure, Miles has finished among the MIAC’s top two in 22 of the past 29 seasons, including nine MIAC titles. At the national level, Miles has recorded 18 top-15 finishes at the national meet and has coached 17 All-Americans. The Johnnies have qualified as a team for the national meet 21 times since 1979.

The Johnnies open the 2008 season with the annual Saint John’s Invitational on Friday, Sept. 12, in Collegeville. They will attempt to defend their conference title at the MIAC Championship on Nov. 1 at Como Park in St. Paul.

Saint Mary's

Coach: Ward Berndt (4th season)
2007 Championship Finish: 10th

Saint Mary's Championship Preview

When Ward Berndt looks over his Saint Mary’s University men’s cross country roster, he likes what he sees — lots and lots of names.

Names that have been through the rigors of collegiate cross country before.

Many times.

Which leaves Berndt hoping that, while his roster numbers have increased, his runners’ numbers — as in their times — will decrease.

“It’s nice to look at our men’s roster and see 16 runners on it, including seven that have run for us the last two years,” said Berndt, whose men were 10th at the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Championships a year ago. “Over the past two years, John Vallez has had to carry the load as the team’s No. 1 runner. But this year, he’s got some people who are looking to step up and push him — which can only help the overall team placing.”

John Vallez (Eagan, Minn.) — an all-region selection as a freshman two years ago — leads the way for the Cardinal men. Jared Brandenburg (Independence, Wis.), Quentin Moore (Minneapolis, Minn.), Jerod Baertsch (Winona, Minn.), Jon Sopcack (Steamwood, Ill.), Shane Bias (Alden, Minn.), Andrew Rath (), Luke Kaplan (Owatonna, Minn.), Marty Howard (Chicago, Ill.) and Gary Borash (Bowlus, Minn.) are also back with another year of collegiate competition under their belt.

“The depth is also a huge plus,” Berndt added. “The sophomore class is coming in with a good deal of experience and they are much further ahead of their fitness this year than last. The senior class, which has remained intact since their freshmen year, continues to provide good leadership and direction to the program that has some young talent.

“Now, hopefully, our guys can use all that experience to make a real run at climbing up the (conference) ladder.”

St. Olaf

Coach: Phil Lundin (1st season)

2007 Championship Finish: 4th

St. Olaf Championship Preview

St. Olaf will look to a mixture of senior leadership and young talent at this year's MIAC championships, their first under Coach Phil Lundin.

Doboul Ruon, a sophomore in his first season of collegiate cross country, has been the Oles' top runner this season, earning wins at the St. Olaf Invitational and Eau Claire's BluGold Invite. Ruon's 8k time of 24:52 at the BluGold Invite is the third-best ever run by a St. Olaf cross country athlete.

Cullen O'Neill and David Green, both seniors, have consistently been St. Olaf's second and third runners this season. O'Neill has finished in the top 15 in all but one race this year, while teammate Green has carried over successes in last years' track season to the cross country course. O'Neill and Green were the Oles' number three and five runners, respectively, at last year's MIAC championships.

Jon Lambert, another Ole sophomore, will also be a factor for the team in the championship race. Lambert was the St. Olaf's second runner at the 2007 MIAC's, and has been the team's number three or four runner in each race this season.

The St. Olaf College Oles have won the MIAC cross country championships twice, most recently in 2004.

St. Thomas

Coach: Pete Wareham (16th season)

2007 Championship Finish: 7th

St. Thomas Championship Preview

The St. Thomas men's cross country team, currently ranked 26th nationally, will look to improve on a seventh-place conference finish of 2007 as they chase their first MIAC crown since 2003. Coach Pete Wareham' team graduated All-MIAC runner Neil Atzinger, but returns six of its top eight runners and has a deep and talented freshmen class. UST won the recent UW-Eau Claire Invite and took third in a large field last week among many Division I teams at the Albany (N.Y.) Invite.

The MIAC's top two team finishers in 2007, St. John's and Carleton, each graduated five of their top seven. In fact 14 of the top 26 placers at the conference meet were seniors. Hamline, St. Olaf and St. John's are other teams who have been or are currently ranked in the nation's top 35 poll and are expected to push for the team title. Five different MIAC teams won the team title in this event in a five-year span from 2002-2006 -- parity not seen in any other conference sport.

Tommie senior Matt Boumeester, who was 40th at the cross country regionals last November, had a breakthrough season in track and field last May. He reached the NCAA championships after running 3:50.6 -- the fastest time by a UST runner in 19 years. He was knocked down in the finals at nationals and missed a top-eight finish.

Five other standout middle-distance runners will look to continue their improvement at the 8,000-meter race -- All-American Brian Sames, Kyle Brandon, Greg Dowe, Rorak Hooten and Evan Schwartz.

Junior Mike Connell has been a pleasant surprise. After a strong spring season when he took seventh in the MIAC steeplechase last May and was seventh in the MIAC indoor 3,000, Connell has consistently run 90 seconds to 3:00 faster than his 2007 cross country times for 8K.

The Tommies also have a deep and promising recruiting class with three runners who had top-seven spots -- Ben Sathre of Chaska, who has been UST's first or second runner in all three races with a best time of 25:25; and Nick Nygaard of St. Michael-Albertville and Tyler Iverson of Moorhead.