




2004 MIAC SOFTBALL PREVIEW

The 2004 MIAC softball campaign will be quite different than the 22 previous seasons. This year will mark the first time that the MIAC Softball schedule has ever included a post-season tournament. The top four teams in the regular season standings will advance to play in the MIAC Tournament at the end of the season with the winner being awarded an automatic qualification into the NCAA Tournament.

The spring begins with an uncertainty as to who is the favorite in the 2004 MIAC Softball race. 2003 MIAC Champ Gustavus, St. Thomas, Hamline, Saint Benedict, and Saint Mary's will look to be on top of the conference standings and battle for the title along with the four playoff berths. Dark Horses in the MIAC that may find a way into the post season include; Carleton, Concordia, Bethel, and Macalester. St. Olaf, St. Catherine's and Augsburg will all have young teams that hope to improve upon last season's performances.


The 2004 MIAC Softball Playoffs will be held April 30-May 1st, 2004 in Dundas and Northfield, Minn.

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Augsburg College		
Head Coach:	Carol Enke (19th season)	
2003 Record:	7-29 (4-18 MIAC / 12th)	
Key Returners:	<p>-- Kristen Lideen (SS, Sr., Champlin, Minn./Champlin Park HS), NFCA All-American third team in 2003, All-MIAC first team all three seasons; led team in virtually every offensive category in 2003 -- .488 average, single-season school records for hits (59), doubles (18) and total bases (89), just 3rd player in school history to have zero strikeouts in single season; career record-holder for batting average (.447), hits (152) and doubles (35), second in total bases (205); also has 75 runs, .603 career slugging percentage, .499 on-base percentage, 40-of-46 stolen bases.</p> <p>-- Melissa Lee (3B, Sr., Cannon Falls, Minn./Randolph HS), All-MIAC honorable mention in 2002 and 2003; .257 average with 29 hits, 8 doubles, 7 RBI, .347 slugging percentage, .336 on-base percentage, and .988 fielding percentage (2 errors in 164 chances) in 2003; career .288 average, 19 doubles, 30 RBI, .956 career fielding percentage.</p> <p>-- Shelley Harris (P, So., Minneapolis, Minn./Southwest HS), 3.36 ERA, 6-15 record as primary pitcher in 2003 (23 appearances, 19 starts), 143.2 IP with 47 strikeouts, 42 walks and .273 opponent batting average.</p> <p>-- Jess Bowman (C/1B, So., St. Louis Park, Minn.), .257 average in 30 games (21 starts) in 2003, 11 RBI, .378 slugging percentage and .282 on-base percentage.</p> <p>-- Audra Thimmesch-Gill (OF, So., St. Paul, Minn./Central HS), starter in centerfield as freshman last season, hit .150 (12-of-80), .951 fielding percentage in 2003.</p> <p>-- Melynda Kleewein (C/OF, Jr., Anchorage, Alaska/Diamond HS), has seen action in 55 games (31 starts) in two seasons with .139 career average; .940 fielding percentage in career.</p>	

Season Preview:	To borrow a line from the movie "Bull Durham," softball can be a simple game. You throw the ball, you hit the ball, you catch the ball.
	For head coach Carol Enke and the Augsburg College softball team, hitting the ball and catching the ball shouldn't be a problem this season. With an All-American anchoring the infield and much of the lineup returning, the Auggies will likely be competitive this season at the plate and in the field.
	But the third component of the "simple game" -- pitching -- will be the key for Augsburg to improve from last year's 7-29 record, 4-18 in the always-competitive Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. And with a sophomore and two freshmen on the Auggie pitching staff, Enke is hoping for positive results in 2004, with one of the team's goals a trip to the four-team MIAC postseason playoffs.
	"The key for us will be the pitching," said Enke, entering her 19th season as Augsburg's head coach. "We've got to be able to throw strikes. If we can throw strikes, our defense will be OK and the bats will be OK."
<u>Complete Augsburg Preview</u>	


Bethel College		
Head Coach:	Darin Thompson (8th season)	
2003 Record:	20-20 (8-14 MIAC / 7th)	
Key Returners:	Becky Foscett: Sr., Catcher, hit .345 in 2003 Julie Berthiaume: Sr., Pitcher, 7-9 with 4.79 ERA in 2003 Alyson Sundberg: Sr., Right Field, hit .214 in 2003 Angie Vedders: So., Pitcher, 5-8 with 5.90 ERA in 2003	
Season Preview:	After losing All-MIAC and All-Region players Karrie Bateman and Kara Wager and Academic All-American Emily Conover, the Royals will look to a younger lineup to lead them through the MIAC schedule. Seniors July Berthiaume (St. Paul, Minn.) Becky Foscett (Prior Lake, Minn.), Alyson Sundberg (St. Paul, Minn.) have all had solid careers and will play an integral piece in Bethel looking to finish high in the league and challenge for postseason playoff berth.	

Carleton College		
Head Coach:	Amy Tenute (7th season)	
2003 Record:	15-15 (11-11 MIAC / 6th)	
Key Returners:	Leslie Barry, Jr., C/DP, Louisville, Ohio, All-MIAC honorable mention, .348, 31 hits, 23 RBIs Vickie Gunderson, Jr., C/DP, Elk Grove Village, Ill. (Elk Grove), 2002 and 2003 All-MIAC, .312, 7 2B, 2 HR, 21 RBIs Amanda Espinosa, Jr., St. Paul, Minn. (Central), .283, 26 hits, 18 runs Steph Lee, Sr., OF, Beaverton, Ore., .270, 27 hits, 21 runs, 5 2B Abby Kalland, Sr., 3B, Northfield, Minn., .269, 25 hits, 15 runs, 9 2B Caitlyn Cornell, So., P, Mankato, Minn. (East), 6-7, 3.11 ERA, 52 K, 65.1 IP	


Season Preview:	<p>Carleton College, which has posted four consecutive .500 or better seasons under seventh-year head coach Amy Tenute, returns seven of its top eight hitters from a year ago in its quest to finish in the top four of the MIAC standings and advance to the newly-created MIAC Playoffs in 2004.</p> <p>But if the Knights are to reach the playoffs, they must find a way to play more consistently. In 2003, Carleton split with seven of 11 MIAC foes, were swept twice and swept themselves twice. "We would do really well in one game and it was almost as if we expected to win the second game rather than going out and getting the job done and finishing the work," Tenute said. "It's something the whole team knows and realizes so we've been working towards being focused over a long period of time, not just focusing for one game and then letting it go."</p> <p>The Knights, 15-15 a year ago and 11-11 in the MIAC, will be paced offensively by juniors Leslie Barry (Louisville, Ohio) and two-time All-MIAC catcher Vickie Gunderson (Elk Grove Village, Ill./Elk Grove). Gunderson hit .312 last season, tallying seven doubles and two homers for a .500 slugging percentage and 21 RBIs. Barry had a breakout campaign, hitting .348 after a rookie season average of .203. Her average was tops among the team's starters, as were her 23 RBIs. She and Gunderson figure to split catching duties while both seeing time at first base and the designated player slot.</p> <p>"Leslie and Vickie are the core of our hitting line-up and the core of our defense, so they'll always be in the lineup , depending on who's pitching," Tenute said.</p> <p>The team's biggest loss is pitcher Andrea Carroll, who was 9-8 last season with a 2.93 earned-run average. She tossed 14 complete games and fanned 114 batters in 124 innings of work. Over the last three seasons she was the winning pitcher in 29 of the Knights' 48 victories.</p> <p>Tenute won't try to replace Carroll, who logged 413 innings over the last three seasons. Instead, the Knights will rely on a pitching-by-committee approach. Sophomore Caitlyn Cornell (Mankato, Minn./East) worked 65 innings last year, tallying a 6-7 mark. Senior lefty Alyssa Honnette (Jackson, Minn./Jackson County Central) threw only nine innings last year, but she was 4-6 two years ago and will join first-year hurler Liesl Van Ryswyk (Claremont, Calif.) in the rotation.</p> <p>There is a fierce battle for a number of spots, a first for the Knights under Tenute. Only Gunderson, Barry, senior third baseman Abby Kalland (Northfield, Minn.), senior center fielder Steph Lee (Beaverton, Ore.) and junior middle infielder Amanda Espinosa (St. Paul, Minn./Central) will be sure bets to crack the starting line-up. Lee and Kalland, team tri-captains with Gunderson, both are starting for the fourth consecutive season. Kalland is coming off a career year at the plate where she hit .287 and slugged .425 with nine doubles and 14 RBIs. Lee will look to return to her form of 2002 when she tallied 30 hits and had an on-base percentage of .421. Espinosa, a two-year starter, had a bit of a sophomore slump last year with only three extra-base hits, though she still hit a solid .281 and reduced her strikeouts by 10. She'll play either shortstop or second base, as sophomore Kari Christianson (Twin Valley, Minn./Norman Co. East) may take over at short and move Espinosa to second, giving the Knights an experienced fielder on each side of the infield.</p> <p>Complete Carleton Preview</p>
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Concordia College			
Head Coach:	Stacey Holm (2nd season)		
2003 Record:	11-24 (7-15 MIAC / 8th-tie)		


Key Returners:	<p>- Mandy Pearson, Jr., Watkins, Minn./Eden Valley-Watkins HS - Shortstop, Junior: Started 33 games, 4th on team with .274 BA, 2nd on team with 13 RBIs.</p> <p>- Steph Boesche, So., Cambridge, Minn./Cambridge-Isanti HS - Pitcher, Sophomore: 15 complete games, 6-10 record, led team with 3.67 ERA and 45 strikeouts.</p> <p>- Gretta Stritesky, Jr., Ogilvie, Minn., Pitcher - Junior: 14 complete games, 4.50 ERA, 5 wins.</p> <p>- Jolene Rebertus, Jr., Chanhassen, Minn./Chaska HS -Third Base, Junior: Started 35 gms, .245 BA, 25 hits, 12 RBIs.</p>
Season Preview:	<p>The 2004 Concordia fastpitch season will be one of new faces and new places. Head Coach Stacey Holm begins her second season at the helm of the Cobbers and will have a history-making, first-year class to help her along the way. Concordia has 16 new players on the roster, which is the most newcomers in one season in program history. To go along with the infusion of new talent, the Cobbers will have five pitchers to choose from. With all that new talent and a new destination for their spring trip, Concordia is hoping to get into the inaugural MIAC playoffs at the end of the season.</p> <p>Leadership and experience will play a key role for the 2004 Cobbers. With all the new faces, the team will need to have a solid core of upperclassmen to navigate through all the ins and outs of the MIAC. The Cobbers graduated their two top hitters from last season. Lost to graduation were all-conference outfielder Jill Flatau and all-conference honorable mention firstbasemen Stacie Johnson. Flatau led the Cobbers in average (.382), slugging percentage (.574) and on-base average (.440). She was in the top five in all three categories in the MIAC. During the course of the year she had seven multiple-hit games and hit safely in 13 of the team's 22 league games. Johnson hit .294 on the season and led the team in home runs (5), RBI's (16) and total bases (54). She was tied for third in the league in home runs.</p> <p>Looking to pick up the offensive slack will be junior shortstop Mandy Pearson, sophomore outfielder Krystle Abrahamson and junior thirdbaseman Jolene Rebertus. Pearson is the top returning hitter for the Cobbers. She hit .274 last year and was second on the team in RBI's. During the winter, she led the Cobber women's basketball team to the MIAC playoff championship game and was voted the conference MVP. Abrahamson started 28 games last year for Concordia and hit .257. Rebertus was third on the team in RBI's in 2003. She has played in the most games in the past two season for the Cobbers (66).</p> <p>On the mound, Holm will hand the ball to Gretta Stritesky who led the team in innings pitched and shutouts. She will benefit from being able to train year round, as she stopped playing basketball to focus on her fastpitch career.</p> <p>Two newcomers for the Cobbers will have an immediate impact on the team. Outfielder Kelli Niess will patrol centerfield and bat in the leadoff spot. Her speed will cause problems for opposing team's defenses. Lindy Sparby, a transfer from St. Thomas will give Holm a solid 1-2 pitching punch.</p> <p><u>For complete Cobber fastpitch coverage</u></p>

Gustavus Adolphus College		
Head Coach:	Shanda Ness (7th season)	
2003 Record:	27-11 (21-1 MIAC / 1st)	


Key Returners:	<p>Molly Biehn (Sr., Pitcher/1st Base, 2003 MIAC Player of the Year, 16-6, 1.50 ERA)</p> <p>Sara Medved (Sr., Pitcher, 10-3, 1.51 ERA, .279 batting average)</p> <p>Audrey Lenocho (So., 1st base, All-Conference, All-Region, All-America, .409 batting average)</p>
Season Preview:	<p>The Gustavus women's softball team returns a solid nucleus from a squad that claimed the MIAC title last year, finished 27-11 overall and earned an NCAA Tournament bid. The team set a school record for wins a season (27) and conference wins in a season (21).</p> <p>The Gusties will be led by a pair of senior pitchers, Molly Biehn and Sara Medved. Biehn led the Gusties with a 1.50 ERA and a 16-6 record. Medved posted similar numbers, going 10-3 with a 1.51 ERA. Biehn was also named the MIAC Player of the Year last year.</p> <p>While pitching will be the team's strength, offense shouldn't be a problem either. The Gusties hit .302 as a team last season and return three of their top five hitters. That trio includes super sophomore Audrey Lenocho, who hit .409 with a .722 slugging percentage while also driving in a team-best 41 RBI's, senior outfielder Ingrid Olson, who hit .344, and Kristen Kunz, who hit .314. Lenocho, who was named First Team All-Conference, First Team All-Region, and Third Team All-America, will anchor the Gusties offense.</p> <p>Others top returners include junior Melissa Aust (third base) and senior Claire Mielke (second base). This duo will provide the Gusties with an experienced pair of infielders. Sophomore Kristen Kunz will also be expected to step into a starting role in the outfield.</p> <p>Key questions for Coach Shanda Ness will be who will fill the hole at shortstop created by the graduation of All-Region selection Christina Diller, as well as the outfield vacancies created by the graduation of Sarah Holm and Julie Langenfeld. The Gusties will need to re-tool the infield and have some younger players step into starting roles in the outfield in order for the team to contend for the league title again this year.</p>

Hamline University		
Head Coach:	Janelle Tieken (6th season)	
2003 Record:	28-10 (15-7 MIAC / 4th)	
Key Returners:	<p>Amanda Gage, Jr, 2B, Forest Lake, Minn. – All-America third team, All-Region first team, MIAC All-Conference first team last season, .398 BA, 15 doubles, one triple, three home runs, 33 RBIs, 47 R</p> <p>Marion Zillhardt, Sr., SS, Anoka, Minn. – MIAC All-Conference honorable mention last season, .423 BA, 11 doubles, five triples, eight home runs, 49 RBIs, 33 R</p> <p>Julia Rossini, Sr., 3B, White Bear Lake, Minn. – All-Region second team, MIAC All-Conference honorable mention last season, .376 BA, one double, one triple, 27 RBIs, 18 R</p> <p>Beth Bisciglia – Sr., P, West St. Paul, Minn. – MIAC All-Conference honorable mention last season, 12-4 record, 102.1 IP, 2.29 ERA, 12 BB, 74 K</p> <p>Niki Seal – Jr., P, Bloomington, Minn. – 12-4 record, 104.1 IP, 30 BB, 72 K</p>	


Season Preview:	<p>Unlike movie sequels, the Hamline fastpitch softball team seems to get better with every installment. Two seasons ago, the Pipers posted a 24-12 record - best in the history of the program. Last year, Hamline improved the record to 28-10 and finished fourth in the MIAC. For an encore, the Pipers hope to earn a berth in the conference's first-ever playoff.</p> <p>The Pipers' offensive attack remains largely intact with three all-conference performers spearheading the heart of the batting order. MIAC first-team, All-Region, and All-America third team selection Amanda Gage and MIAC honorable mention honorees Julia Rossini and Marion Zillhardt look to pick up where they left off last season.</p> <p>Second baseman Gage (Forest Lake, Minn.) batted .398 with a team-leading 13 doubles and 33 RBIs while scoring 47 runs. She was also stellar defensively with a .974 fielding percentage.</p> <p>Third baseman Rossini (White Bear Lake, Minn.), who was also named All-Region for the Pipers last season, batted .376 with 27 RBIs.</p> <p>Zillhardt (Anoka, Minn.), a four-year starter at shortstop, was equally as good with a .423 batting average with eight home runs and a school record 49 RBIs in 38 games.</p> <p>The Pipers return only one starting outfielder from last year's squad with the loss of All-American Emily Deuth and Lindsay Miller to graduation.</p> <p>Tieken will look to sophomore Rachael Young (Buffalo, Minn.) to provide stability to a young outfield corps. Young batted .297 with four doubles and one home run during her first-year campaign. Junior Jamie Fenner (Washburn, Wis.), sophomore Becca Egan (Clintonville, Wis.), and first-years Perrin Banks (Superior, Wis.), Holly Wiborg (Chaska, Minn.), and Kari Lenzendorf (Eastman, Wis.) will battle for the other two outfield positions.</p> <p>The squad will catch a talented, veteran staff that will be a cornerstone for the 2004 season. Senior Beth Bisciglia and juniors Niki Seal and Chris Hodroff all had solid 2003 campaigns.</p> <p>Bisciglia was named MIAC honorable mention last season after posting a 12-4 record with a 2.29 earned run average. She struck out 74 and walked just 12.</p> <p>Seal recorded almost identical numbers, going 12-4 with a 2.67 ERA. She fanned 72 and walked 30. Hodroff was equally effective with a 4-2 record, striking out 53 in just 42.2 innings.</p>


Macalester College		
Head Coach:	Tom Cross (1st season)	
2003 Record:	12-25 (7-15 MIAC / 8th-tie)	
Key Returners:	Caitlin Adams (Sr., 3B, Monona, Wis.) All-MIAC, .357, .571 slg., 19 RBI Lisa Bauer (Sr., SS, Woodbury, Minn.) All-MIAC, .315, 18 runs Chris Soma (Sr., C, Kiester, Minn.) .234, 15 runs Alisha Seifert (Jr., P, Mahtomedi, Minn.) 215 IP, 5.60 ERA	

Season Preview:	<p>Macalester made some strong progress last season and is looking to continue the move forward under new head coach Tom Cross. A former successful softball coach at Concordia-St. Paul, Cross is optimistic for a big season in 2004. The Scots moved up from 12th two years ago to eighth last season and another jump is possible with the addition of some good new players to the nucleus of last year's squad.</p> <p>The left side of the infield will once again be a team strength as the Scots return a pair of All-MIAC players, Caitlin Adams at third base and Lisa Bauer at shortstop. Adams led the team in just about every category, finishing with a .357 batting average and 19 RBI. She had 12 extra base hits and a .571 slugging percentage. Bauer, like Adams a very good defensive player, led Mac with 18 runs scored and finished with a .315 average.</p> <p>Chris Soma returns behind the plate for the Scots after hitting .234 and 15 runs scored. Outfielder Kat Sprole tied for the team lead in stolen bases last season with Adams and Bauer and is another key returner. Meghan Pedersen also returns at first base. Alisha Seifert is back after pitching 215 out of 220 innings and posting a 5.60 ERA. Seifert will not, however, be expected to pitch every game this season as help has arrived in the circle with the arrival of Kristen Mainz.</p> <p>Complete Macalester Preview</p>
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College of Saint Benedict		
Head Coach:	Denny Johnson (18th season)	
2003 Record:	17-15 (12-10 MIAC / 5th)	
Key Returners:	Ani Jordan, SR, Vandais Heights, 3x All-MIAC Kari Dykhoff, SR. Wadena, All-MIAC Michelle Boys, JR, Minnetonka, All-MIAC, All-MIAC Honorable Mention Meghan Shepherd, SR, Burnsville.	

Season Preview:	<p>The Blazer softball team is very excited about the 2004 season. A mixture of veteran players and newcomers offer an array of options. From pitching, to defense and offense, CSB will be aiming for a top spot in the MIAC.</p> <p>Senior three-time All-MIAC selection Ani Jordan leads the way on the mound for Saint Ben's. Along with junior Lindsey Peterson, and first-year players Christina Gardner and Monica Eiden, the Blazers have strength and much needed depth when the conference season arrives.</p> <p>At the plate senior All-MIAC player Kari Dykhoff leads the returnees while playing first base. Junior Michelle Boys, a 2002 All-MIAC selection and 2003 All-MIAC Honorable Mention player, returns to the leadoff spot and anchors the infield from her shortstop position. Senior captain Meghan Shepherd returns at second base after spending part of the 2003 season overseas in London. Sophomore Jenny Monroe takes over at third base; junior Gillian Glass and first-year Brittney Johnson provide back-up at the infield positions.</p> <p>Behind the plate, senior captain Steph Schirmers controls the pitching staff with junior Megan Jahnke providing capable backup.</p> <p>The outfield is anchored by a combination of seniors and sophomores. Senior captain Ellie Jelsing, senior Kelli Doschadis, and sophomores Cassie Schlangen and Kristin Beranek will give the Blazers experience and speed in the defensive coverage.</p> <p>The Blazers returned from their 2004 spring break trip to Tucson, Ariz., with a 9-1 record. They played in six games that were decided by only one run, losing only one of those games. For the week, the Blazer pitchers posted a 1.80 ERA. On offense, the team batted .340 and averaged 5.3 runs per game. Defensively, the Blazers had a .940 fielding percentage while giving up 3.5 runs per game.</p> <p>"We were pleased to be able to give everyone playing time and the coaching staff learned about the team over the 10-game span," head coach Denny Johnson said. "This experience will help us when we begin in the MIAC, which is always tough."</p>
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College of St. Catherine		
Head Coach:	Madge Makowske (9th season)	
2003 Record:	9-24 (6-16 MIAC / 10th)	
Key Returners:	Rita Pomroy, JR, All-MIAC	
Season Preview:	<p>The Wildcats will rely heavily on the arm of first-year Ashley Decker this season. She will be asked to pitch a lot of innings as St. Kate's has just 10 players on their roster. Junior Rita Pomroy returns after an All-MIAC sophomore season and looks to be the leader of this young team. Senior Jessica Albrecht will also take on a big leadership role as the team looks to have a successful season.</p> <p>St. Kate's will get a test early as they open the season at the Sun West Tournament in Orange, CA. They play nine games against some very strong competition. After the Wildcats return home they jump straight into their MIAC schedule as they play seven double headers in two weeks.</p>	

Saint Mary's University		
Head Coach:	Nikki Fennern (4th season)	
2003 Record:	21-13 (16-6 MIAC / 3rd)	

Key Returners:	<p>Amy Edge (Jr., C/OF, Mineral Point, Wis.; All-MIAC, .390 BA, 39 H, 9 2B, 2 HR, 26 RBIs, .540 slugging %)</p> <p>Amy Langer (Sr., OF, Savage, Minn.; .382 BA, 21 R, 39 H, 8 2B, 23 RBIs, .461 slugging %, 11 SB)</p> <p>Jenny Schipp (So., P, North St. Paul, Minn.; 1.70 ERA, 4-1, 49.1 IP, 29 Ks)</p> <p>Hanni Lohmann (Sr., P, Lake Elmo, Minn.; 2.05 ERA, 7-6, 82.0 IP, 30 Ks)</p>
Season Preview:	<p>Nikki Fennern isn't afraid of rollercoasters. In fact, the Saint Mary's University fastpitch coach is rather fond of them.</p> <p>Unless, of course, when that rollercoaster ride takes the form of her team's 2003 season.</p> <p>"It was a wild ride, that's for sure," admitted Fennern, whose Cardinals closed out their year with a 21-13 overall mark and their second straight 16-6 MIAC finish. "We had a lot of great, great performances throughout the year, but our biggest downfall last year, and the key to our success this coming year, is we have to have a more consistent mental approach.</p> <p>"Physically, we were as talented as anyone in the conference — but mentally, we weren't always as sharp as we needed to be."</p> <p>And the creation of an MIAC post-season tournament — and the NCAA's awarding of the conference's automatic berth to that tournament champion — puts that much more importance on the conference season.</p> <p>"I think the conference tournament adds an interesting twist," explained Fennern of the four-team, double-elimination tournament. "In the past, your goal was always to win the conference championship, and with it came the (automatic) qualifier. Now, winning the regular season gives you the No. 1 seed (for the conference tournament), but that's all.</p> <p>"It's a nice addition in that it allows four teams to get that experience of playing in a post-season tournament," continued Fennern. "The argument (against having a conference tournament) has always been, a team can be just above average all season, sneak into the (MIAC) tournament, get hot on one weekend and get the bid. But when you think about it, that's what the regional and national tournament are all about, too — getting hot at the right time."</p> <p>If the Cardinals are going to make any type of post-season run, they are going to rely on the right arms of Hanni Lohmann (Lake Elmo, Minn.) and Jenny Schipp (North St. Paul, Minn.), as well as the bats of people like Amy Edge (Mineral Point, Wis.), Amy Langer (Savage, Minn.), Amy Lang (Oshkosh, Wis.) and Jenni Gutterman (Shoreview, Minn.).</p> <p>"We are still a young team in terms of class, but we are also an experienced team — our freshmen and sophomores saw a ton of playing time last year," said Fennern, noting that Lohmann and Langer are the only seniors on the Cardinals' 20-person roster. "Hopefully, that experience will carry us along."</p> <p>Complete Saint Mary's preview</p>

St. Olaf College		
Head Coach:	Lori Littleton Cooling (10th season)	
2003 Record:	6-26 (5-17 MIAC / 11th)	

Key Returners:	<p>Sarah Herby (Sr., Richfield, Minn.)</p> <p>Meghan Urbanski (Sr., Circle Pines, Minn.)</p> <p>Andrea Smith (Jr., Burnsville, Minn.)</p> <p>Laurie Thomas (Jr., Rockford, Minn.)</p> <p>Bekki Hagen, (Jr., Northfield, Minn.)</p> <p>Lindsay Wier (So., Menomonie, Wis.)</p>
Season Preview:	<p>The Oles anticipate a successful year in 2004. The team struggled at times in 2003, finishing 6-26 overall and 5-17 in MIAC play, but a host of young talent combined with outstanding senior leadership offers a strong outlook for the 2004 season.</p> <p>After losing eight players to graduation last year, an experienced nucleus remains in place for the Oles. Expect seniors Sarah Herby (Sr., Richfield, Minn.) and Meghan Urbanski (Sr., Circle Pines, Minn.) to be key players for the Oles this spring. Two other key returners are junior outfielders Andrea Smith (Jr., Burnsville, Minn.) and Laurie Thomas (Jr., Rockford, Minn.) With eleven sophomores rounding out the squad, the team is young but quite talented. Rose Keimig (So., Princeton, Minn.) at Third base and Chelsey Rodd (So., Cloquet, Minn.) at first base are key returning players who saw playing time last season. Rounding out the squad is outfielder Kate Schulz (So., Chillicothe, Ohio) and Jenna Green (So., Apple Valley, Minn.). Strength in the infield is Jenna Arotta (So., Duluth, Minn.) at shortstop and Laura Little (So., Edina, Minn.) also at shortstop, and new comer Maggie Roscher (So., Mendota Heights, Minn.) at second base. Jen Bynes (FY, Aurora, Colo.) will provide back-up at first base. On the mound is returner Bekki Hagen, (Jr., Northfield, Minn.) and first year Annie Olson. Behind the pitchers are catchers Lindsay Wier (So., Menomonie, Wis.) and Lauren O'Brien (So, Sioux Falls, S.D.).</p> <p>The Oles spent Spring Break in Tucson, Arizona, competing in the games from March 20-27.</p>

University of St. Thomas		
Head Coach:	John Tschida (10th season)	
2003 Record:	32-6 (20-2 MIAC / 2nd)	
Key Returners:	<p>Nikki Conway, SO, C-OF, All-MIAC, All-Region, MIAC Rookie of the Year, all 38 games, .472 BA, 11 HRs, .911 slug%, 55 runs, 33 RBI, 15 2B, 8 BB</p> <p>Michelle Wong, JR, 2B, All-Region, all 38 games, .410 BA, 55 hits, 40 runs, 16 RBI, .976 field% at 2B</p> <p>Kristi Huegel, JR, OF-SS, All-Region, all 38 games, .393, 44 hits, 27 runs, 32 RBI, 6 HRs, 11 2Bs</p> <p>Kathleen Fitzpatrick, SR, Util, 35 games, .337 BA, 32 hits, 20 runs, 11 RBI, 8 BB</p> <p>Colleen Fitzpatrick, SR, C-Util., 21 Games, .293 BA, 17 hits, 14 runs, 12 RBI, 6 2Bs, one error in 78 chances</p> <p>Janet Nagel, SO, LHP-DP, 3-0, 35 IP, 3.09 ERA, 31Ks, 12 BB; at plate hit .323 in 36 games, 30 hits, 16 runs, 21 RBI, 10 2B, 9 BB</p>	

**Season
Preview:**

The Tommies will have to replace four star graduates -- All-American catcher-DH Gina Utecht, Academic All-American Shannon Moore, LHP Stacy Tamble and RHP Andrea Sweeney. The softball seniors helped the Tommies go 145-35 (.806) in their four-year era, including an 82-6 conference record. They were a part of three conference championships and three NCAA playoff berths, including a fifth-place national finish in 2002.

Utecht started all of her team's 175 games on her career (.322 BA, 149 hits, 17 HR, 33 doubles, 240 total bases, 121 RBI and a .512 slugging percentage). Her 17 career homers rank second in conference history. Utecht improved her batting average from .217 in 2000 to .267 in 2001 to .389 in 2002 to .394 in 2003. Tamble, a three-time All-MIAC honoree, had 95 career appearances and went 64-13, with 452 strikeouts, 95 walks, 27 shutouts and a 1.48 ERA. That included an MIAC record of 41-3 with 19 shutouts and an 0.71 ERA. Moore, who led the MIAC in hitting in 2003 at .512, played 172 career games with 199 hits, 134 runs, 124 RBI, 301 total bases, 49 doubles, four triples, 15 HRs and a .378 average. Moore had a school-record 64 hits in 2002. Sweeney started the last two seasons and in 45 appearances (214 innings) had 139 strikeouts and 63 walks while compiling a 27-8 record.

The 2004 Tommies were 10-4 through games of March 24. They went 3-3 and placed sixth of 24 teams in the March 12-14 NFCA Leadoff Classic in LaGrange, Ga. They started 7-1 on their spring-break trip to Orlando, Fla.

St. Thomas just missed cracking the NFCA Division III top 25 preseason poll and received the next most votes after the first 25 teams.

Coach John Tschida -- who will coach his 400th game in 10 seasons when the Toms open MIAC play Tuesday at St. Mary's -- returns seven starting position players and one pitcher from 2003, when UST finished 32-6 and was MIAC runner-up at 20-2. Tschida comes into 2004 with 312 career wins, including a 105-24 record in three seasons at St. Thomas.

The Tommies, who have never finished with a losing record in their 22-year softball history, had a streak of NCAA playoff berths end at six but extended a string of 30-win seasons to seven.

The Tommies won 24 of their last 27 games in 2003 and swept 10 of 11 MIAC doubleheaders. But two one-run losses to league-champ Gustavus dropped them to second by one game in the MIAC standings. In NCAA stats, the Toms ranked fifth in batting (.367), 10th in scoring (7.24 runs a game), first in doubles per game (95, 2.50). Their 36 home runs was ninth most in Division III history.