



## 2005 MIAC SOFTBALL PREVIEW

Look for the 2005 MIAC softball season to be another exciting race to the top spots in the conference. 2005 marks the second year of the MIAC Tournament, in which an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament is at stake. Teams will be fighting hard to both hold their positions from last year as well as improve on their preseason performances to earn the right to play in the MIAC Tournament.

St. Thomas comes into the season as one of the favorites, entering the 2005 campaign ranked number 1 in the preseason national poll. Saint Benedict, Hamline, and Gustavus will be fighting to return to the playoffs and finish in one of the top four spots in the MIAC. Saint Mary's, Bethel, Carleton, and Concordia will enter the 2005 season as teams ready to take the next step after narrowly missing the MIAC Tournament a year ago. St. Olaf, Macalester, Augsburg, and St. Catherine will attempt to rely on their veterans and newcomers to ensure successful seasons.

Last season marked the first MIAC Softball Tournament in which the top four teams in the conference played for an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament. St. Thomas, Saint Benedict, Hamline and Gustavus represented the MIAC in the inaugural tournament. The number one seed, St. Thomas, was ranked 4th in the nation at season's end and was riding a 31 game unbeaten streak. Meanwhile, the number 2 seed, Saint Benedict, had a strong streak of their own; winning eleven of their last twelve. The two met in the MIAC championship game, with St. Thomas outlasting Saint Benedict by a score of 3-2 in 9 innings. The Tommies earned the automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament and won their way to their first softball national title.

**Augsburg:** While this year's Auggie team is young, with 11 of 16 players either freshmen or sophomores, the team does return five starters from 2004. The youth should also ensure that Augsburg will be able to count on the experience in seasons to come. Shelley Harris will be a key to this season, in her third year as a pitcher she posts a 3.46 ERA and has 123 strikeouts. Freshmen Jolene Ross will likely fill in at shortstop for All-American and four-time All-MIAC Kristen Lideen. This blend of youth and skill should be a good recipe for success in the 2005 Auggie season.

**Bethel:** First-year head coach Rod Radcliffe will be without eight starters from last season, including All-MIAC catcher Becky Foskett, but remains confident in his team. Captains Angela Vedders and Rachel Franklin return as Bethel's top pitchers, with shortstop Meaghan Nelson behind them to anchor the infield. These returning student-athletes along with a strong work ethic and excited coaching staff will play large roles in the Royals' success.

**Carleton:** Carleton finished last season in a tie for sixth place. With the returning group of veteran experience from last season, the Knights feel strong about their ability to make a move in the standings in 2005. Three-time All-MIAC first basemen/catcher Vicki Gunderson returns as the team's leader and brings with her a .302 batting average and school record 25 RBIs from last season. Junior All-MIAC Honorable Mention pitcher Caitlyn Cornell also is back to carry the load on the mound. Coach Amy Tenute can put the ball in the hands of Cornell with confidence after a season in which she was 4th in the conference in strikeouts with 104. The veterans should be able to work with the newcomers to make the progress needed to move ahead in the MIAC.

**Concordia:** Last year's Cobber team finished at 12-22 overall and 8-14 in MIAC play and head coach Stacey Holm will begin the 2005 season with limited senior leadership, carrying only five seniors on her roster. For the Cobbers to improve on their 2004 season, the team will look for a big year from All-MIAC and 2004 MIAC Rookie of the year outfielder Kelli Ness, and All-MIAC Honorable Mention shortstop Mandy Pearson. The sophomore outfielder, Ness, started every game for the Cobbers and led the team with a .348 batting average, 16 RBI's, and 20 stolen bases. Senior Pearson batted .280 and was second on the team with 13 RBI's. Their talent along, with Pearson's senior leadership, will be an important part for a successful Cobber season.

**Gustavus:** The Gusties are coming off of a strong 2004 season in which they made the MIAC playoffs, eventually losing to national champion St. Thomas. With the loss of all-conference pitcher Molly Biehn and all-conference outfielder Ingrid Olson, the leadership role will fall on Audrey Lenocho. Lenocho, a two-time All-American infielder, set five school records last season and whose .544 batting average was second highest in

Division III. Janie Hanson and Joyce Dewitz also return to give the Gusties a strong pitching rotation to help advance further in the postseason.

**Hamline:** Hamline has recently established itself as a dominant team in the conference. Head coach Janelle Tieken is eager to continue the improvement her team has shown and is confident the Pipers will improve on their third place finish from a year ago. The Pipers did lose four, four-year starters from a year ago, but have capable players to fill their shoes. Seniors Amanda Gage, Niki Seal, Emily Gross, and Joan Sheedy will provide a strong foundation for the program. These returning student-athletes bring with them a number of accolades and should give the Pipers another season they can be proud of.

**Macalester:** To some second-year coaches who are coming off of a 10th place finish, the loss of six key players may be somewhat devastating, but not to head coach Tom Cross. The return of four-year starters, pitcher Alisha Seifert and outfielder Kat Sprole give Cross and the Scots a great deal of confidence entering the 2005 MIAC season. Seifert threw in most of the Scots games and Sprole posted the team's highest batting average with .308. The Scots also return starters from both the infield and outfield, and have several newcomers who should be able to contribute.

**Saint Benedict:** The Blazers feel good about their chances to finish strong in the MIAC this season after finishing four games behind NCAA champs St. Thomas. While they did lose 6 six seniors and one junior, they feel enough of the pieces are in place to have another strong season. Seniors Michelle Boys, Gillian Glass, and Megan Jahnke should give the Blazers a strong infield and keep them alive offensively. Senior Lindsey Peterson and sophomores Christina Gardner and Monica Eiden should provide the team with the pitching power it needs to remain competitive this season.


**St. Catherine:** Head coach Madge Makowske will look for 2004 All-MIAC catcher Rita Pomroy to lead a group of young talent higher into the MIAC standings in 2005. A promising statistic is that eight of the Wildcat's losses were decided by one run; three of which were to Saint Benedict, Hamline and Gustavus. With five key returning sophomores and a strong group of freshmen and transfers, the Wildcats will look to make their mark in the MIAC in 2005.


**Saint Mary's:** Head coach Nikki Fennern admits in past seasons the team has been too focused on winning. Fennern admits that each year their ultimate goal is winning an NCAA championship, and this year will be no different. The only change will be their approach to that goal by focusing on the little things. Along with their adjusted focus, the depth and talent of this team will be the keys to success in 2005. The return of All-MIAC and NFCA All-Region senior Amy Edge, and All-MIAC Jenni Gutterman and Jenny Schipp will be a great help to that ultimate goal. The experience and skill these student-athletes bring will help instill that needed focus on the little things, and will help continue the Cardinals winning ways.

**St. Olaf:** First-year coach Ruthie Neuger faces the challenge of improving upon the teams ninth-place finish last season. Neuger will have the help of junior All-MIAC catcher Lindsay Weier who had a strong 2004 season. Weier led the Oles' in offense last year with a .311 batting average and .489 slugging percentage. The Oles' will be looking for a repeat performance of those numbers, along with junior pitchers Bekki Hagen and Laura Torgerson to help contend in the conference.


**St. Thomas:** Head coach John Tschida begins the 2005 MIAC season after taking the Tommies to their first ever NCAA softball championship and breaking the NCAA Division III record for consecutive wins with 41. The Tommies should remain a strong force in the conference after returning three All-Americans and nine of their top eleven players from last year. Junior All-American, MIAC Pitcher of the Year, and DIII Softball Player of the Year Janet Nagel is poised to have another strong season after finishing 2004 at 33-2 and a 1.10 ERA. All-American and MIAC Player of the Year senior Michelle Wong, All-American junior Nikki Conway, and a host of other returning veterans and newcomers give the Tommies an exceptional group of talent for the 2005 season.

The 2005 MIAC Softball Tournament will be held May 6-May 7 at Bethel and Hamline University. The top four teams at the end of the conference regular season qualify for the Tournament. The winner of the tournament receives the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2005 NCAA Tournament.


<b>Augsburg College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Carol Enke (20th season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	9-27 (5-17 MIAC / 10th - tie)	
<b>Key Returners:</b>	-- <b>Jolene Ross</b> (UTL, Fr., Arden Hills, Minn./Mounds View HS) -- <b>Ashley Westerman</b> (UTL, Fr., Bemidji, Minn.) -- <b>Jackie Bohmbach</b> (UTL, So., Hudson, Wis.) -- <b>Jodi Boyd</b> (OF, Jr., Hartley, Iowa/Hartley-Melvin-Sanborn HS) -- <b>Marissa Lindback</b> (INF, So., Minneapolis, Minn./South HS)	
<b>Season Preview:</b>	There will be a definite youth movement for the Augsburg College softball team in 2005, with 11 of the 16 players on the Auggie roster either freshmen or sophomores.  But that shouldn't deter the Auggies from a goal of improvement in the very competitive Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, a league that has produced the NCAA Division III softball national champion twice in the last five seasons. Augsburg finished 9-27 overall, 5-17 in MIAC play last season.  Five starters return to the Auggie lineup this season, and combined with a strong group of newcomers who should make an impact right away, the Auggies will make improvement a continued goal.  Complete Augsburg Season Outlook: <a href="http://www.augsburg.edu/athletics/softball/0405preview.html">www.augsburg.edu/athletics/softball/0405preview.html</a>	


<b>Bethel University</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Rod Radcliffe (1st season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	16-24 (10-12 MIAC / 6th - tie)	
<b>Key Returners:</b>	-- <b>Angela Vedders</b> , Junior, Pitcher -- <b>Rachel Franklin</b> , Senior, Pitcher/OF -- <b>Meaghan Nelson</b> , Junior, Shortstop -- <b>Lindsey Norman</b> , Senior, Outfield -- <b>Diane VanDeWalker</b> , Senior, Outfield	

<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>After finishing the 2004 campaign with a 16-24 overall record, first-year head coach Rod Radcliffe brings a renewed enthusiasm to the Bethel's fastpitch team. "I am excited with our coaching staff, work ethic of this team, and the solid foundation of a Christian team."</p> <p>Bethel will have many new faces after losing All-MIAC catcher Becky Foskett and seven others to graduation. There is still a solid nucleus of players returning and new players will have the opportunity to show their skills on the field.</p> <p>Pitching: Leading the way in the pitching circle will be captains Angela Vedders (junior, 9-9 in 2004) and Rachel Franklin (senior, 4-1 in 2004). They will build a solid pitching tandem along with sophomore Abby LaDuke and freshman Jennifer Lundgren vying for time on the mound.</p> <p>Catching: Foskett caught every inning last year so there will be a whole new look for the 2005 season. Vying for the catching position are sophomores Dani Larson (.255 in 2004) and Christi Paulson and freshman Amie Lorence.</p> <p>Middle Infield: Junior shortstop Meaghan Nelson (.255 in 2004) will anchor the infield. Also vying for playing time are freshman Rachel Smith and sophomores Hannah Subbich and Abby LaDuke.</p> <p>First and Third: The corners are anchored by senior Lexi Giesler (.250 in 2004) and juniors Megan Slothouber, Leah Getts, and Elicia Sheppard.</p> <p>Outfield: The outfield has the most experience with three seniors, Lindsey Norman (.250 in 2004), Diane VanDeWalker (.285 in 2004), and Rachel Franklin (.250 in 2004). Other athletes seeing playing time in the outfield will be freshman Mollie Daniels and Amie Lorence. Rachel Smith and Angela Vedders will also add depth to the outfield.</p> <p>Complete Bethel Season Outlook: <a href="http://cas.bethel.edu/athletics/Softball/2005/preview.html">http://cas.bethel.edu/athletics/Softball/2005/preview.html</a></p>
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<b>Carleton College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Amy Tenute (8th season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	14-24 (10-12 MIAC / 6th - tie)	
<b>Key Returners:</b>	<p>-- <b>Vickie Gunderson</b>, 5-7, Sr., C/1B, started 38 games in 2004, Three-time All-MIAC, .302 BA, 7 2B, 5 HR (school record), 25 RBI</p> <p>-- <b>Leslie Barry</b>, 5-9, Sr., C/3B, started 38 games in 2004, .333 BA, 9 2B, 14 RBI</p> <p>-- <b>Amanda Espinosa</b>, 5-2, Sr., 2B, started 35 games in 2004, .314, 27 hits, .433 OB%</p> <p>-- <b>Caitlyn Cornell</b>, 5-7, Jr., P, 20 App, 18 GS, 6-10, 3.22 ERA, 9 CG, 1 Sho, 120.1 IP, 104 K, 42 BB</p> <p>-- <b>Liesl Van Ryswyk</b>, 5-10, So., P/OF, 24 App, 3 GS, 2-3, 5.63 ERA, 54.1 IP, 23 K, 26 BB</p>	


<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>Carleton College returns five starters from last year's team, including its top three hitters and pitching ace. Last year's squad compiled a 10-12 record in the MIAC, which put them in a tie for sixth place in the conference.</p> <p>This year's team will be led by three-time All-MIAC first base/catcher Vickie Gunderson (Sr./Elk Grove Village, Ill./Elk Grove), who last year became the first Knight to earn All-MIAC honors in three consecutive seasons. Gunderson hit .302 last season and set a Carleton record with five home runs on the year, which extended her career total to nine, making her Carleton's all-time home run leader. Gunderson drove in a team-high 25 runs and notched seven doubles and one triple, giving her a slugging percentage of .509, best on the team.</p> <p>The Knights also return All-MIAC honorable mention pitcher Caitlyn Cornell (Jr./Mankato, Minn./Mankato East), who figures to carry the bulk of the pitching load as the ace of the staff. She compiled an ERA of 2.50 last season, 10th best in the MIAC, while striking out 104 batters, which was fourth best in the conference. Senior catcher/third base Leslie Barry (Louisville, Ohio) led the Knights in average last season, hitting .333. She also led the team with nine doubles, and was second on the team with 14 RBI. Second base Amanda Espinosa (Sr./St. Paul, Minn./Central), rounds the Knights trio of returning seniors. She was second on the team with a .314 batting average last season.</p> <p>Complete Carleton Season Outlook: <a href="http://webapps.acs.carleton.edu/athletics/?sport=245&amp;module=content&amp;id=107523">webapps.acs.carleton.edu/athletics/?sport=245&amp;module=content&amp;id=107523</a></p>
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<b>Concordia College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Stacey Holm (4th season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	12-22 (8-14 MIAC / 8th)	
<b>Key Returners:</b>	-- tba	
<b>Season Preview:</b>	Preview to come.	

<b>Gustavus Adolphus College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Shanda Ness (8th season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	21-17 (15-7 MIAC / 4th)	
<b>Key Returners:</b>	<p>-- <b>Audrey Lenocho</b> (1B, Junior, Pine Island, Minn.): National Fastpitch Coaches Association Division III All-America Second Team and MIAC All-Conference in 2004. Led Gusties with 109 total bases, 68 hits, 8 HRs, .544 AVG and an .872 slugging % (all single-season records at Gustavus).</p> <p>-- <b>Joyce Dewitz</b> (P, Sophomore, Good Thunder, Minn.): Dewitz made 10 appearances last season on the mound striking out 12 and allowing no runners to cross the plate in 11.1 innings pitched.</p> <p>-- <b>Kristin Kunz</b> (OF, Junior, Esko, Minn.): Kunz played shortstop last year, but will be moved to center field for the 2005 season. She recorded a batting average of .109 with seven hits and three RBI in 2004.</p>	

<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>The Gusties ended last season at 21-17 overall and advanced to the first ever MIAC Post-season softball tournament. Gustavus lost to MIAC regular season champion Saint Thomas 4-2 and to Hamline 5-4 in the double-elimination event.</p> <p>Gustavus will need to replace all-conference pitcher Molly Biehn and all-conference outfielder Ingrid Olson who were both lost to graduation. The Gusties will be helped again this season by the return of two-time All-America infielder Audrey Lenocho who set five school records in single season statistical areas last season. Janie Hanson and Joyce Dewitz will return on the pitching mound for the Gusties, while Kristin Kunz will move to the outfield after playing shortstop for the Gusties in 2004.</p> <p>Complete Gustavus Season Outlook: <a href="http://www.gustavus.edu/oncampus/athletics/news.cfm?view=sb&amp;id=1186">www.gustavus.edu/oncampus/athletics/news.cfm?view=sb&amp;id=1186</a></p>
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<b>Hamline University</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Janelle Tieken (7th season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	26-16 (16-6 MIAC / 3rd)	
<b>Key Returners:</b>	<p>-- <b>Amanda Gage</b>, Sr., 2B/SS, R-R, 5-5, Forest Lake, Minn. – 2-time Louisville Slugger/NFCA All-America third team. 3-time MIAC All-Conference first team. In 2004, hit .430 (64-for-149) 16 2Bs, 2 3Bs, and 4 HRs. Led team with 45 runs.</p> <p>-- <b>Niki Seal</b>, Sr., P, R-R, 5-7, Bloomington, Minn. (Kennedy) – MIAC All-Conference first team and All-Midwest Region 3rd team in 2004. led the team with 42 RBIs and 7 HRs, .326 AVG (45-for-138). Set school pitching record with 22 wins and 1.53 ERA in 192 inn.</p> <p>-- <b>Joan Sheedy</b>, Sr., 1B/DH, L-R, 5-9, Austin, Minn. (Austin Pacelli) – MIAC All-Conference honorable mention and All-Midwest Region third team in 2004. Batted .383 (49-for-128) with seven doubles and a home run. Sheedy knocked in 22 runs on the season.</p> <p>-- <b>Rachael Young</b>, Jr., OF, L-R, 5-5, Buffalo, Minn. – MIAC All-Conference first team and All-Midwest Region third team in 2004. Batted .324 (45-for-139) with 6 2Bs, 1 3B, 2HRs, 25 RBIs. She also stole 11 bases.</p> <p>-- <b>Emily Gross</b>, Sr., C, R-R, 5-6, West St. Paul, Minn. (Sibley) – Started 40 games last season, batting .302 (35-for-116) with eight doubles and 20 RBIs</p>	
<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>Coming off a record-breaking season, which included Hamline's highest conference finish and five All-Conference athletes, the fastpitch softball team is looking forward to another successful season.</p> <p>"In the most recent seasons, we have proven ourselves as a strong program," said seventh-year head coach Janelle Tieken. "We will continue this season in taking strides towards improvement in the conference."</p> <p>In 2004, Hamline finished third in the MIAC with a record of 26-16, 16-6 in MIAC play, and participated in the first-ever conference tournament. This record was the best finish the team has recorded since the start of the softball program in 1989. The team also had five All-Conference and Louisville Slugger NFCA All-Midwest Region selections.</p> <p>The Pipers should continue to hit and field the ball well, but the quality that will prove to be more effective is the senior leadership. The team's four seniors have learned the tradition of success.</p> <p>Seniors Amanda Gage (Forest Lake, Minn.), Niki Seal (Bloomington, Minn.), Emily Gross (West St. Paul, Minn.), and Joan Sheedy (Austin, Minn.) will provide a strong foundation for the program.</p> <p>Complete Hamline Season Outlook:  <a href="http://www.hamline.edu/hamline_info/athletics/softball/2005_Season/outlook1.html">www.hamline.edu/hamline_info/athletics/softball/2005_Season/outlook1.html</a> </p>	


<b>Macalester College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Tom Cross (2nd season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	7-27-1 (5-17 MIAC / 10th-tie)	
<b>Key Returners:</b>	-- <b>Kat Sprole</b> (Sr., CF, Des Moines, Ia.) .308, 11 runs -- <b>Alisha Seifert</b> (Sr., P, Mahtomedi, Minn.) 4.49 ERA, fifth in the MIAC in IP	
<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>Despite the loss of six important seniors to graduation, second-year head coach Tom Cross and the Macalester softball team are quietly optimistic about the 2005 season as the Scots hope to continue their climb up in the MIAC. Macalester's hitting must improve for the Scots to take the next step.</p> <p>Macalester returns key seniors and four-year starters in pitcher Alisha Seifert (Mahtomedi, Minn.) and outfielder Kat Sprole (Des Moines, Ia. /Roosevelt). Seifert pitched in 29 of the team's 35 games and posted a 4.49 ERA. She ranked fifth in the MIAC in innings pitched. Sprole led the Scots with a .308 batting average in '04 and was second on the team in runs scored (11) from her leadoff spot in the order.</p> <p>Also returning to the lineup are veterans like pitcher / third base Kristin Mainz (So., Farmington, Minn.), outfielder Katie Malnor (So., Madison, Wis. / Edgewood), infielder Laura Meinke (Jr., Stillwater, Okla.), outfielder Nyalleng Moorosi (Sr., Hlotse, Lesotho) and catcher Kate Ayer (Jr., Gales Ferry, Conn. / Ledyard). Coach Cross will look for key production from several newcomers, including shortstop Katie Grudnowski (Fy., Minneapolis, Minn. / The Blake School), who will bat near the top of the order.</p> <p>Complete Macalester Season Outlook: <a href="http://www.macalester.edu/~softball/news02/05_preview.html">www.macalester.edu/~softball/news02/05_preview.html</a></p>	

<b>College of Saint Benedict</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Denny Johnson (19th season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	29-7 (18-4 MIAC / 2nd)	
<b>Key Returners:</b>	-- <b>Michelle Boys</b> , Sr., Minnetonka H.S./Eden Prairie (2004 All-MIAC, Louisville Slugger/NFCA Division III All-Central Region Third Team) -- <b>Christina Gardner</b> , So., Holy Family H.S./Arvada, Colo. (2004 All-MIAC Honorable Mention) -- <b>Krisitin Beranek</b> , Jr., New Ulm Cathedral H.S./New Ulm -- <b>Jenna Tody</b> , FY, Woodbury H.S./Woodbury	




<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>Any team with the likes of Michelle Boys (Eden Prairie/Minnetonka) anchoring its defense from the shortstop position will be playing at a high level. During the 2004 season, she set two new individual season records in hits and at-bats. Add in Boys' fellow senior captains, Gillian Glass (N. St. Paul/Hill-Murray) at third base and Megan Jahnke (Richmond/Rocori) at first base, there is an obvious making for another strong team. Rounding out the infield and playing second base will be sophomore Brittney Johnson (St. Cloud/St. Cloud Tech). First-years Nikki Holmes (Eagan) and Patty Devoy (Mendota Heights/Visitation) will be backing up the infield.</p> <p>Senior captain Lindsey Peterson (Hopkins) returns to the mound for her final season. Sophomore pitchers Christina Gardner (Arvada, Colo./Holy Family) and Monica Eiden (Maple Grove/Totino Grace) will tag with Peterson to dominate the mound this season. First-year pitchers Kim Murphy (St. Cloud/St. Cloud Cathedral) and Devoy will add support in the Blazers quest for a conference championship.</p> <p>Carissa Baumeister (Hutchinson) has shown strength from numerous places on the field. Her athletic ability makes her an asset behind the plate. Chelsey Charests' (Battle Lake), power behind the plate makes it difficult for any team to steal. Her offensive abilities are strong as well. Andria Manz (Willmar) has true knowledge and poise behind the plate. Jenna Tody (Woodbury) provides power and strength from all positions on the field.</p> <p>Juniors Kristin Beranek (New Ulm/ New Ulm Cathedral) and Cassie Schlangen (Freeport/Melrose) will cover the outfield green with their speed and superb reaction time on the ball. Sophomore transfer Jinnie Rigli (Lakeville) has shown a quick first step to the ball. Her line-drive ability at the plate makes her a dangerous attribute. Eiden, Tody, and Baumeister are all capable athletes that may fill in spots when needed in the outfield.</p> <p>Complete Saint Benedict Season Outlook: <a href="http://www.csbsju.edu/csbsports/softball/outlook.htm">www.csbsju.edu/csbsports/softball/outlook.htm</a></p>
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College of St. Catherine		
Head Coach:	Madge Makowske (10th season)	
2004 Record:	9-26 (4-18 MIAC / 12th)	
Key Returners:	-- <b>Rita Pomroy</b> (SR / Brooklyn Center, MN) 2004 All MIAC .361 BA 13 RBI	
Season Preview:	<p>Despite finishing last in the conference last year at 4-18 (9-26 overall), the Wildcats played eight games that were decided by one run. Three of those games were against teams that finished in the top four in the MIAC conference including St. Ben's, Gustavus and Hamline. With six returning starters from last year's team and a good group of new talent, Coach Makowske is excited about the future of this team.</p> <p>The Wildcats return Senior All-Conference catcher Rita Pomroy, and sophomores Kelly Walentiny (SS), Angie Johnson (3rd), Randi Wuensch (OF), Kristin Plesch (OF) and Ashley Decker who pitched in all but 3 of the Wildcats 35 games last season. In addition to the veteran talent, seven young first year players join the squad and the maturity of two new transfers to the team will create an environment to challenge in the MIAC.</p> <p>The Wildcats open their 2005 season March 4th at the Superior Dome in Michigan and host their first home game on Saturday April 2nd at 1:00 PM against St. Olaf.</p>	


<b>Saint Mary's University</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Nikki Fennern (5th season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	23-15 (13-9 MIAC / 5th - tie)	



<b>Key Returners:</b>	<p>-- <b>Amy Edge</b> (Sr., C, Montfort, Wis. / First-team All-MIAC, Louisville Slugger/NFCA All-Midwest Region Second Team, CoSIDA Academic All-America First Team; .416 BA, 42 hits, 14 2B, 3 HR, 32 RBIs, .644 slugging %)</p> <p>-- <b>Jenni Guttermann</b> (Jr., INF, Shoreview, Minn. / First-team All-MIAC; .403 BA, 33 runs, 52 hits, 7 2B, 8 3B, 3 HR, .651 slugging %, 16 SB)</p> <p>-- <b>Mandy Tschernach</b> (Jr., INF, Rice Lake, Wis. / .352 BA, 27 runs, 38 hits, 2 2B, 1 3B, 15 RBIs, 14 SB)</p> <p>-- <b>Jenny Schipp</b> (Sr., P, North St. Paul, Minn. / First-team All-MIAC; 2.17 ERA, 15-8, 157.1 IP, 171 Ks)</p>
<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>Every year, the Saint Mary's University fastpitch softball team sits down to map out the team's goals for the season.</p> <p>Every year, the Cardinals' ultimate goal has been the same - to claim a second NCAA Division III national championship.</p> <p>This year is different - sort of.</p> <p>The Cardinals are still taking aim at that ultimate prize, but their approach to reaching it is going to be a bit different.</p> <p>"Every year we've set one goal as a team - to win (the national championship), and that's been our only focus," said SMU coach Nikki Fennern, whose team finished with a 23-15 overall record a year ago. "But what was happening was, we weren't focusing on the little things that get you to your ultimate goal.</p> <p>"We were worried about winning, and nothing else."</p> <p>So a change as been made in the Cardinals' mindset.</p> <p>Sure, they still want to win. In fact, SMU's new approach is all about winning.</p> <p>Coaches always stress how a team can't look too far into the future, that they have to play "one game at a time." Fennern is taking that approach two steps backward - SMU is looking to win every inning, and in every inning, they are looking to win every at-bat.</p> <p>"Our focus is going to be on every single pitch and every single at-bat - we want to win each one," explained Fennern. "We still want the same thing, we're just narrowing our focus."</p> <p>Fennern hopes that by narrowing the focus to each play, the Cardinals will be a more consistent team than they were a year ago, when they managed just one winning streak longer than four games, and split seven of their 15 doubleheaders.</p> <p>"Our consistency was lacking last year - we'd be outstanding one game, then blah the next," said Fennern, who has the luxury of returning almost her entire starting lineup - including All-MIAC and NFCA All-Region performers Amy Edge (Mineral Point, Wis. / .416 BA, 101 AB, 12 R, 42 H, 14 2B, 3 HR, 32 RBIs), Jenni Guttermann (Shoreview, Minn. / .403 BA, 129 AB, 33 R, 52 H, 8 3B, 22 RBIs, 18 SB) and Jenny Schipp (North St. Paul, Minn. / 15-8, 2.17 ERA, 157.1 IP, 171 Ks). "You can't play that way and expect to be successful. We need to play at a consistently high level each and every time we take the field."</p> <p>Complete SMU Season Outlook:  <a href="http://sports.smumn.edu/softball/2005/newsletter/sbpreview.html">http://sports.smumn.edu/softball/2005/newsletter/sbpreview.html</a></p>

<b>St. Olaf College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Ruthi Neuger (1st season)	

<b>2004 Record:</b>	7-26 (6-16 MIAC / 9th)
<b>Key Returners:</b>	-- <b>Lindsay Weier</b> , C, Jr., Menomonie, Wis. - All-MIAC in 2004 -- <b>Chelsey Rodd</b> , 1B, Jr., Cloquet, Minn. -- <b>Rose Keimig</b> , IF, Jr., Princeton, Minn. -- <b>Bekki Hagen</b> , P, Jr., Northfield, Minn. -- <b>Laura Torgerson</b> , P, Jr., Red Wing, Minn.
<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>The St. Olaf College softball team begins the 2005 season under the direction of first-year head coach Ruthie Neuger, a St. Olaf Athletics Hall of Fame inductee. Neuger will try to help the Oles improve on their 7-26 campaign from 2004.</p> <p>St. Olaf, 6-16 in MIAC play last spring, returns All-MIAC catcher Lindsay Weier to lead the Ole offense. In 2004, Weier had offensive team bests in average (.311), RBI (19), 3B (3), HR (2), slugging pct. (.489) and walks (7).</p> <p>St. Olaf will likely platoon pitchers Bekki Hagen and Laura Torgerson. Hagen threw 158 of the 192 innings last season. Torgerson, who did not play last year, was 4-9 with a team-best 2.36 ERA in 2003.</p>

<b>University of St. Thomas</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	John Tschida (5th season)	
<b>2004 Record:</b>	46-4 (22-0 MIAC / 1st)	
<b>Key Returners:</b>	<p>--<b>Janet Nagle</b> (P-1B, Jr., Minnetonka, Minn.); 2004: D-III SB Player of the Year, All-American, MIAC Pitcher of the Year, won last 31 starts; 33-2 W-L, .159 foes BA, 1.10 ERA, 235 strikeouts, 69 walks in 205 inn., 13 shutouts.</p> <p>--<b>Michelle Wong</b> (SS, Sr., Golden Valley, Minn.); 2004: All-American, MIAC Player of the Year; .467 BA, 70 hits, 44 runs, 34 steals; led conference in hitting, steals and hits in the 22-game schedule; team 42-1 when she started.</p> <p>--<b>Kristi Huegel</b> (CF, Sr., Alta Vista, Iowa/New Hampton HS); 2004: All-Region, .395 BA in 42 games with 49 hits, 38 RBI, 26 runs, 6 2Bs, 2 3Bs, 3 HRs.; in 127 career games has 102 RBI, 134 hits, 75 runs, 13 home runs and 25 doubles.</p> <p>--<b>Nikki Conway</b> (C, Jr., Mendota Heights, Minn./Cretin-Derham Hall HS), 2004: All-American, 50 games, .361 BA, 9 HRs, 56 runs, 31 RBI, 25 BB, 14 2Bs.</p>	
<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>Coach John Tschida returns three All-Americans and nine of his top 11 players from a 46-4 team that won its last 41 games to claim the school's first NCAA softball championship and break the D-III record for consecutive wins.</p> <p>The 2005 Toms went 12-5 against a strong non-conference schedule in March with four one-run defeats and a 10-8 loss. They fell from No. 1 in the preseason national poll to No. 6 in the first regular-season rankings released March 30. They have hit 18 home runs in 17 games and are ahead of last year's MIAC-record pace when they hit 40 homers in 50 games.</p> <p>Tschida starts his fifth season with the Tommies (151-28 overall, 86-5 MIAC here) and is now the winningest active coach in Division III (10 years, 358-73, .831).</p> <p>St. Thomas went an unprecedented 25-0 vs. conference foes last season. The Tommies have won four of the last five and 11 all-time conference titles, and are 107-6 vs. MIAC foes since 2000. They will put a 31-game MIAC overall winning streak and a 34-game conference road win streak on the line in April.</p>	