





2006 MIAC SOFTBALL PREVIEW

The 2006 MIAC Softball season looks to be an exciting one. St. Thomas, two-time defending NCAA Division III Champions, will once again look to defend their title. The Tommies, ranked number one in preseason polls, will be challenged by Saint Mary's, Gustavus, and Hamline who all qualified for the conference tournament last season and will again be looking to qualify this year. Saint Benedict, Concordia, St. Catherine, Bethel, Carleton, St. Olaf, Augsburg, and Macalester will all look to improve upon last years results and will strive to be one of the top four teams that qualify for the conference tournament.


The 2006 MIAC Softball Playoffs will be held May 5-6 at Carleton and St. Olaf Colleges. The top four teams at the end of the conference regular season qualify for the playoffs with the winner of the tournament receiving the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2006 NCAA Tournament.

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Augsburg College		
Head Coach:	Carol Enke, 20th Season	
2005 Record:	4-18 MIAC (11th Place) / 8-26 Overall	
Key Returners:	NA	
Season Preview:	NA	

Bethel University		
Head Coach:	Rod Radcliffe, 2nd Season	
2005 Record:	8-14 MIAC (Tied 8th Place) / 14-25 Overall	
Key Returners:	<p>Angela Vedders (P/OF, Sr., Foreston, Minn. / Milaca)</p> <p>Meaghan Nelson (SS, Sr., Mendota Heights, Minn. / Henry Sibley)</p> <p>Diane Christianson (OF, Sr., Little Canada, Minn.)</p> <p>Elicia Adams (OF, Sr., Isanti, Minn / Cambridge-Isanti)</p> <p>Dani Larson (1B, Jr., Grand Marais, Minn. / Cook County)</p> <p>Hannah Subich (OF, Jr., Mansfield, Ohio / St. Peters)</p> <p>Christi Paulson (P, Jr., Young America, Minn. / Lester Prairie)</p>	


Season Preview:	Bethel's softball team finished their 2005 season with a 14 - 25 overall record. With only 14 players on the team, they played with a lot of heart and a "never quit" attitude. The Royals said goodbye to three seniors on the team and welcome back some major contributors from last year along with a large group of newcomers. With a full squad, the coaching staff hopes the injuries of a season ago have passed and given way to intra-squad competition at different positions in preseason practices. Radcliffe states, "our main focus is three-fold, we want our team to have a great experience playing softball, we want them to be very competitive in the MIAC and regionally, and we want to prepare them in their lives spiritually." This season you will see a lot of new faces in the lineup to go along with the veterans on the team.
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Carleton College		
Head Coach:	Amy Tenute, 9th Season	
2005 Record:	8-14 MIAC (Tied 8th Place) / 11-22 Overall	
Key Returners:	Caitlyn Cornell (P, Sr., Mankato, Minn. / East) Kari Christianson (SS, Sr., Twin Valley, Minn. / Norman Country East) Jamie Lykken (OF, Sr., Edina, Minn.) Steph Dodge (OF, Sr., Rochester, Minn. / Century)	

Season Preview:	<p>A team that has six starters and its top two pitchers back would seemingly have few holes to fill, but Carleton must replace its top three run producers from a year ago and blend some talented newcomers into the mix heading into a 2006 season that head coach Amy Tenute hopes will culminate in the school's first MIAC Playoff berth.</p> <p>Gone is four-time All-MIAC selection Vickie Gunderson '05, along with four-year starters Leslie Barry '05 and Amanda Espinosa '05. The trio combined to drive in more than half of Carleton's runs last year and notch nearly 60 percent of Carleton's extra-base hits.</p> <p>Tenute, though, is optimistic as Carleton returns senior captain Caitlyn Cornell (Mankato, Minn./East), one of the MIAC's top pitchers. The righty was an All-MIAC honorable mention for the second consecutive season a year ago, as she led the team with a 3.14 ERA while compiling an 8-13 record. She enters this season with 309 career strikeouts, second best in school history and 151 away from the school record.</p> <p>Joining Cornell in the starting rotation will be junior Liesl Van Ryswyk (Claremont, Calif.), who was the only other player to throw a pitch for the Knights a year ago. She compiled a 3-9 record and a 7.32 ERA while throwing 80.1 innings last season. Rookie Marika Long (Wilmette, Ill./New Trier) gives Tenute a trio of options to throw into the ring.</p> <p>The other change Knights' fans will witness is a new offensive strategy from Tenute. With big boppers like Gunderson and Barry the past four years, the Knights used the long ball as their weapon of choice. With those two players gone, the Knights will use the short game in 2006. "We've completely changed our offensive philosophy to create some more offense and have a little more fun," Tenute said. "We'll try to keep other teams off balance and try to manufacture more runs. We'll put pressure on the other team's defense to make plays."</p> <p>In the infield, the Knights return two starters on the right side of the infield in Erica Bolan (Jr./Northfield, Minn.) at first base and Carina Ellis (Jr./Mahtomedi, Minn.) at second base. Carleton will be boosted by the return of shortstop Kari Christianson (Sr./Twin Valley, Minn./Norman Country East), who did not play last season because of a knee injury, but was Carleton's regular starter at shortstop in 2004. The Knights will need to replace Gunderson at third base, and sophomore Rhemi Abrams-Fuller (Spokane, Wash./Ferris) and Elise Johnson (Jr./Grantsburg, Wis.) will battle for Gunderson's third-base job.</p> <p>Behind the plate, the Knights hope that first-year player Aron Feingold (Berkeley, Calif./The College Preparatory School) can replace Barry. "She brings a lot of enthusiasm and a strong work ethic," Tenute said. "She's not afraid to speak up and take charge and those are the qualities you want in a catcher."</p> <p>The outfield remains intact for the Knights, as they return all three starters from a year ago. This fact has Tenute feeling good about the chemistry between the three. Senior captain Jamie Lykken (Edina, Minn.) will lead off for the Knights and provides excellent athleticism in center field, while right fielder Steph Dodge (Sr./Rochester, Minn./Century) is the team's top returning batter, as she hit .266 a year ago and is poised for a break-out season at the plate, according to Tenute. In left field, the Knights will look to returning starter Shayna Simmons (Jr./Eagan, Minn.) to again provide solid defense.</p>
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Concordia College			
Head Coach:	Stacey Holm, 4th season		
2005 Record:	9-13 MIAC (Tied 6th Place) / 11-22 Overall		

Key Returners:	<p>Krys Abrahamson (OF, Sr., Olivia, Minn./B-O-L-D)</p> <p>Amanda Johnson (2B, So., Grey Eagle, Minn./Long Prairie-Grey Eagle)</p> <p>Lisa Kott (P/1B, Jr., Bozeman, Mont.)</p> <p>Kelli Niess (SS, Jr., Rice, Minn./Sauk Rapids-Rice)</p> <p>Lindy Sparby (P, Sr., Cold Spring, Minn./Cold Spring-Rocori)</p>
Season Preview:	<p>The theme for the 2006 Concordia fastpitch softball team will be "taking the next step." The Cobbers were on the verge of breaking into the top five in the MIAC last season, and with seven of the nine starters returning from last year's squad, Stacey Holm's squad will be looking to make their first postseason appearance in program history in 2006.</p> <p>Holm's fourth year as head coach has all the makings of being her best. Starting pitchers Lindy Sparby (Sr., Cold Spring, Minn./Cold Spring-Rocori HS) and Lisa Kott (Jr., Bozeman, Mont.) are back to give Concordia a solid presence on the mound. Sparby led the team with a 2.73 ERA in 2005 and was named to the MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention Team. She will also play first base when not pitching and her experienced bat will help the Cobber offense throughout the season. Kott appeared in seven games last season as a pitcher. She will see more time on the mound with the departure of Gretta Stritesky '05, who started 12 games last season and had a 4.37 ERA.</p> <p>Offensively, Concordia will be sparked by the top two hitters from a year ago. Amanda Johnson (So., Grey Eagle, Minn./Long Prairie-Grey Eagle HS) led Concordia in hitting last year as a freshman. She hit .298 and also had a team-best .426 slugging percentage. Johnson carried over her success as a first-year player into the annual spring trip this season. After the first ten games of the year, Johnson was hitting .333 with two home runs and a slugging percentage of .633. Kelli Niess (Jr., Rice, Minn./Sauk Rapids-Rice HS) was second on the team in hitting in 2005. She averaged .295 and finished with a team-best .351 on-base percentage. She has started 2006 on a tear as well. During the team's Arizona spring trip, she led the squad with a .467 average. She is also a threat on the base paths. The main running threat on the team, she was 5-of-7 in steal attempts last year and has already stolen eight bases in 2006.</p> <p>Joining Johnson and Niess at the top of the lineup will be outfielder Krys Abrahamson (Sr., Olivia, Minn./B-O-L-D HS) . Abrahamson hit .236 last year but is off to a .387 start this season. In the team's first 10 games, she has two home runs and a sky-high .710 slugging percentage. Another pleasant surprise for Holm this spring has been the play of junior catcher Shantelle Nogowski (Jr., Twin Valley, Minn./Norman County East HS). Nogowski, who hit just .184 in her sophomore season, knocked the ball around to the tune of a .300 average in Arizona and had two doubles and two triples. Her four extra-base hits this year equal her season total from last year.</p> <p>Defensively the Cobbers will have to replace All-MIAC shortstop Mandy Pearson. Pearson had 192 chances in the field last year, the most of any player on the team. Her range to both third and second base made her one of the top players in the league. Niess has been penciled into the position after spending her first two seasons as the team's center fielder. Her quickness with the glove and speed will help the left side of the infield continue its stellar defensive play. She will be joined on the left side by freshman Amanda Michaelson (Shoreview, Minn./Mounds View HS). Michaelson replaces all-conference honorable mention third baseman Jolene Rebertus. She has settled into the position very nicely, committing only one error in the team's first ten games in 2006.</p> <p>If the Cobbers can continue to improve on their 5-5 record to open the 2006 campaign, then they should improve on the team's sixth-place finish from last season and hopefully take the next step into the playoffs.</p>


Gustavus Adolphus College		
Head Coach:	Jeff Annis, 1st Season	
2005 Record:	18-4 MIAC (3rd Place) / 27-16 Overall	
Key Returners:	<p>Audrey Lenocho (1B, Sr., Pine Island, Minn.)</p> <p>Julie Mahre (2B, So., White Bear Lake, Minn.)</p> <p>Joyce DeWitz (P, Jr., Mapleton, Minn. / Good Thunder)</p>	
Season Preview:	<p>The Gustavus softball program will usher in a new era as Jeff Annis assumes the reigns as the new head coach. Annis will be working with a veteran squad that returns nine letterwinners and seven starters from a team that posted a record of 27-16 and finished third in Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference play. Senior All-America performer Audrey Lenocho will lead the offense, while junior Joyce DeWitz will anchor the pitching staff.</p> <p>Lenocho, a three-year starter at first base, will anchor the infield along with all-conference second baseman Julie Mahre. Lenocho will be looking to an exclamation point on a standout career, while Mahre will be looking to add to a first year where she led the team in hitting (.441) and was named to the all-conference team. Whitney Bartolo returns at third base where she started 42 games and hit .225. Annis will be looking to find a starting shortstop and the early favorites appear to be first year players Rachel Click and Emily Klein. The catching position will be divided between the trio of sophomore Erin Ge, and juniors Tina Strauss and Abby Bernstein.</p> <p>The outfield will be anchored by senior centerfielder Mary Furlong and sophomore left fielder Dawn Lewis. The duo started over 40 games each last season with Lewis hitting .287 and Furlong .263. The right field position will likely be filled by a newcomer. Those competing for the position include Allie Morem, Sarah Willis, Briana Hewitt, and Kristi Klingler.</p> <p>Junior Joyce DeWitz will once again handle the majority of the pitching duties for the Gusties. Last season, DeWitz compiled a 20-11 record with 195.1 innings pitched and a miniscule opponents batting average of .129 (lowest in school history). DeWitz fanned 196 batters, and needs 251 strikeouts to overtake LeVander as the strikeouts leader in school history.</p>	


Hamline University		
Head Coach:	Janelle Ticken, 8th Season	
2005 Record:	16-6 MIAC (4th Place) / 21-20 Overall	
Key Returners:	Rachael Young (OF, Sr., Buffalo Minn. / Buffalo) Sara Mickelson (RIF/OF, So., West St. Paul, Minn. / Cretin-Derham Hall) Holly Wiborg (IF, Jr., Chaska, Minn. / Chaska)	

Season Preview:	<p>Although the names and faces have changed, the 2006 version of the Hamline University fastpitch softball team still has the same hard work and dedication that earned them two consecutive MIAC playoff berths.</p> <p>"We want to build on the tradition of Hamline softball," eighth-year head coach Janelle Tieken said. "We might be utilizing a lot of new faces, but we have the same desire as in the past."</p> <p>The Pipers have been one of the MIAC's most feared teams over the last four seasons. They have posted back-to-back 16-6 records in conference play and have a .670 winning percentage in the MIAC over the past four years. To get back to that level, the Pipers, who have won 99 games from 2002-05, will use a young and talented group.</p> <p>Tieken will have just one senior on the roster in senior centerfielder Rachael Young. Young is a two-time All-MIAC first team selection. "We expect Rachael to lead by example and experience," Tieken said. "She's been emotionally driven to help the people around her, which is a helpful characteristic when there are a lot of new faces. We expect her to put up similar numbers at the plate."</p> <p>Young was second in the MIAC with a .516 batting average in conference play. For the season, she hit .464 with 11 doubles, two triples, and one home run. Young scored 41 runs scored and knocked in 23. It was the fifth highest batting average in Hamline fastpitch softball history.</p> <p>The offensive burden will also fall on sophomore Sara Mickelson (West St. Paul, Minn.). The right fielder led the conference in slugging percentage (.806) while knocking in a conference-best 26 runs. For the entire season, Mickelson hit .410 with 43 RBIs and 24 runs scored. Mickelson set a Hamline single season record with 10 home runs to go along with three doubles and two triples.</p> <p>Junior Holly Wiborg (Chaska, Minn.) will anchor the infield. Last year, Wiborg had a breakout season, hitting .301 with 21 runs scored before missing the last 13 games with a broken hand. She will be joined in the infield by sophomore Lindsey Lingl (Forest Lake, Minn.), who .253 in her first-year campaign, as well as junior Katie Prasek (Mounds View, Minn.), who returns to catch after a year absence.</p> <p>The Pipers could see as many as five first-years in the starting lineup. Sophomore Marie Gross (West St. Paul, Minn.) is the only other position player with experience. She will split time between left field and pitching, leaving first-years Grace Weinreich (Isle, Minn.), Sarah Dittberner (Forest Lake, Minn.), and Kellie Hoen (Cologne, Minn.) fighting for playing time at left field. First-years Diane Litzau (Lester Prairie, Minn.) and Erin Dodor (Somerset, Wis.) could see time in the outfield and catcher.</p> <p>On the mound, the Pipers will turn to first-year Theresa Boleen (White Bear Lake, Minn.), sophomore Brittany Nelson (Duluth, Minn.), and Gross.</p> <p>Tieken knows that her young squad will go through a learning process early on, but believes the team will be a much more exciting team to watch, and in the end, show the desire that has made the team one of the best in the MIAC.</p>
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Macalester College			
Head Coach:	Tom Cross, 3rd Season		
2005 Record:	1-21 MIAC (12th place) / 3-35 Overall		

Key Returners:	<p>Katie Grudnowski (SS, So., Minneapolis, Minn. / Blake School)</p> <p>Kristen Mainz (P/1B, Jr., Farmington, Minn.)</p> <p>Nyalleng Moorosi (OF, Sr., Hlotse, Lesotho / Red Cross Nordic)</p>
Season Preview:	<p>After losing a good senior class to graduation a couple years ago, the Scots fell to a disappointing 3-35 overall record and 1-21 MIAC mark in '05. This season, Macalester is looking to begin the rebuilding process under third-year coach Tom Cross.</p> <p>All-MIAC outfielder Kat Sprole and pitcher Alisha Seifert graduated, but everyone else is back while several newcomers will be asked to play key roles for the young Scots. Macalester's top returner is Katie Grudnowski. The speedy shortstop hit .233 with a team-leading 12 runs scored. She stole nine bases and was second on the team with 20 hits. Outfielder Nyalleng Moorosi hit .247 and ranked third on Macalester last season in hits with 19 and second in slugging with a .325 figure.</p> <p>Kristen Mainz moves into the No. 1 spot in the pitching circle after the team has been led the last four seasons by Seifert. Mainz pitched 67 innings last year and gained valuable experience.</p> <p>Complete season outlook at: http://www.macalester.edu/athletics/softball/news02/06_season_outlook.html</p>


College of Saint Benedict		
Head Coach:	Denny Johnson, 20th Season	
2005 Record:	12-10 MIAC (5th Place) / 20-13 Overall	
Key Returners:	<p>Christina Gardner (P, Jr., Arvada Colo. / Holy Family)</p> <p>Cassie Schlangen (OF, Sr., Freeport, Minn. / Melrose)</p> <p>Kristen Beranek (OF, Sr., New Ulm, Minn. / New Ulm Cathedral)</p> <p>Jenny Monroe (IF, Sr., Shakopee, Minn. / Chaska)</p>	
Season Preview:	St. Ben's finished the 2005 campaign with a 20-13 overall record and finished fifth in the MIAC with a record of 12-10. Pitching and defense will be the strengths for the Blazers this season. Saint Ben's roster is full of experienced athletes as well as young talent. All-MIAC junior pitcher Christina Gardner (Arvada Colo. / Holy Family H.S.), who had a 3.43 ERA and 41 K's in 2005, will be leading the Blazer pitching staff that is deep with talent. Captains for CSB this spring include seniors Cassie Schlangen (Freeport, Minn. / Melrose H.S.), Kristen Beranek (New Ulm, Minn. / New Ulm Cathedral H.S.), and Jenny Monroe (Shakopee, Minn. / Chaska H.S.). Saint Ben's is coached by Denny Johnson who begins his 20th year of coaching the Blazer softball team.	


College of St. Catherine		
Head Coach:	Madge Makowske, 11th Season	
2005 Record:	9-13 MIAC (Tied 6th Place) / 20-19 Overall	
Key Returners:	Jessica Lewandowski (P, Sr., Vadnais Heights, Minn. / Mounds View) Angie Johnson (3B, Jr, Wadena, Minn. / Wadena Deer Creek)	

Season Preview:	<p>The Wildcats enjoyed their best season in 2005, finishing sixth in the MIAC at 9-13 and 20-19 overall. The Cats will return to the Finlandia Tournament in Michigan where they went 4-0 and scored 48 runs against their opponents. With eight returning starters from last year's team, the Wildcats will work to break their own conference leading season record of 34 home runs. Coach Makowske is also excited about this group's collective talent and experience.</p> <p>The Wildcats will return two All-Conference Honorable Mention players: senior Jessica Lewandowski (P) and junior Angie Johnson (3rd). Also returning will be juniors Morgan Kane (OF), Kelly Walentiny (SS), Ashley Decker (P) and sophomores Kayla Schmidt (P), Sheila Dowling (OF), and Callie Bobseen (OF). In addition to the veteran talent, six young first year players join the squad and will round out this roster that hopes to challenge for a play-off spot in the MIAC.</p>
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Saint Mary's University		
Head Coach:	Nikki Fennern, 7th Season	
2005 Record:	19-3 MIAC (2nd Place) / 37-12 Overall	
Key Returners:	Jenny Schipp (P/IF/OF, Sr., Oakdale, Minn. / North St. Paul) Jenni Gutterman (IF, Sr., Shoreview, Minn. / Mounds View) Tara Close (OF, Jr., North St. Paul, Minn.) Nikki Jung (Jr., IF, Inver Grove Heights, Minn. / Simley)	
Season Preview:	<p>In her first year as the Saint Mary's University fastpitch softball coach, Nikki Fennern guided the Cardinals to a fourth-place finish in the 2001 NCAA Division III World Series. Over the next three seasons, the Cardinals found themselves in an unfamiliar position, on the outside looking in when postseason play began.</p> <p>Then came the 2005 season. The Cardinals appeared in their first-ever Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Tournament, and earned one of the three at-large berths into the NCAA regional tournament, only to have their post-season run halted by top-ranked Washington (Mo.) University, which beat SMU twice in the double-elimination Seed 1 Tournament.</p> <p>For Fennern and the Cardinals, however, being back in the post-season mix was nice but it's not enough. "I told our team last fall that its good to be happy about what we accomplished last season," said Fennern, whose 2005 team boasted three All-MIAC and three All-Region selections. "But don't be satisfied. Qualifying for the MIAC Tournament and reaching the regionals was nice but now we want to take that next step."</p> <p>To do that, Fennern will first have to replace the entire right side of her infield, not to mention finding a replacement for four-year starter Amy Edge behind the plate. "We've definitely got some holes to fill," admitted Fennern, who graduated five off of last year's team, but does return All-MIAC and All-Region selections Jenny Schipp (North St. Paul, Minn.) and Jenni Gutterman (Shoreview, Minn.) who are both coming off career seasons a year ago. "But from what I've seen thus far this fall, we've got a lot of options."</p> <p>Complete SMU Fastpitch Softball Preview: http://sports.smumn.edu/softball/2006/newsletter/sbpreview.html</p>	

St. Olaf College	
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Head Coach:	Ruthie Neuger, 2nd Season	
2005 Record:	7-15 MIAC (10th Place) / 14-22 Overall	
Key Returners:	NA	
Season Preview:	NA	

University of St. Thomas		
Head Coach:	John Tschida , 6th Season	
2005 Record:	21-1 MIAC (1st Place) / 43-6 Overall	
Key Returners:	Janet Nagle (LHP, Sr., Minnetonka, Minn.) Nikki Conway (C, Sr., Mendota Heights / Cretin-Derham Hall) Maria Bye (P/OF, So., Maple Plain, Minn. / Orono) Carrie Embree (RHP/U, Jr., Waukee, Iowa) Mandy Evens (3B, Sr., Prior Lake, Minn.) Kristina Trapp (OF, Sr., Jordan, Minn.)	
Season Preview:	<p>The 2005 Tommies went 31-1 in April in May and repeated as NCAA Division III champions with a 43-6 record. Coach John Tschida's team has some of the pieces in place for another conference title run and possibly another May postseason charge. The Tommies were 20-0 in postseason play over the last two seasons.</p> <p>Tschida starts his sixth season with the Tommies (194-34 overall, 104-6 MIAC here) and is now the winningest active coach in Division III (starting 11th season, 401-79, .831).</p> <p>Leading the returners are four All-America candidates -- senior catcher Nikki Conway (31 career HRs), shutdown pitchers Janet Nagle, a senior All-American, and Maria Bye, a sophomore; and versatile junior Carrie Embree.</p> <p>Conway (31 career home runs) is on pace to become just the second NCAA Division III player to reach 200 runs scored.</p> <p>Nagle needs nine strikeouts to break the Tommie school record and 31 to reach 500 on her career. Her career postseason record is 18-0 with a 1.01 ERA and 115 strikeouts and 35 walks in 105 innings.</p> <p>Bye had a dazzling freshman season both on the mound (17-3, 1.53 ERA, 160 Ks) and at the plate (.402 BA, 39 hits, 27 runs). In 10 postseason games, she batted .480 with 12 hits, seven RBI, six runs and four walks at the plate, and on the mound was 2-0 with one save and an 0.40 ERA</p> <p>Embree, who has 17 hits and a .500 batting average in 12 career NCAA playoff games, will pitch and could play as many as four other positions in the field.</p> <p>St. Thomas is 55-1 in its last 56 games vs. MIAC teams (24-1 last season). The Tommies outscored conference opponents 203-14 in their 21-1 regular-season finish in 2005. The Tommies have won five of the last six and 12 all-time conference titles, and are 131-7 vs. conference foes since 2000.</p>	