



## 2007 MIAC SOFTBALL PREVIEW

The 2007 MIAC Softball season looks to be a competitive one. St. Thomas, 2006 NCAA Division III Runner-up, will once again look to defend their MIAC regular season and playoff title. The Tommies will be led by All-American pitcher Maria Bye and All-American first base player/pitcher Carrie Embree. Look for the Tommies to be challenged by Gustavus, Saint Mary's, Saint Benedict, and St. Catherine all who rounded out the top five spots in the MIAC preseason coach's poll. The Gusties, the only MIAC team to beat St. Thomas last season, will be led by senior captain and pitcher Joyce DeWitz. First-year Saint Mary's head coach Jen Miller, who was the catcher on the 2000 SMU National Championship team, will look to lead Saint Mary's to a third consecutive MIAC post season appearance. Saint Benedict will also be looking to capture an MIAC playoff spot. The Blazers will look to a strong returning class of five seniors for leadership this season. St. Catherine, who missed out on the playoffs last season due to a tie breaker, will look to learn from that experience and push for a spot in the 2007 playoffs. The Wildcats will look to senior pitcher Jessica Lewandowski for leadership on the mound.

Concordia, Bethel, Hamline, Augsburg, Carleton, St. Olaf and Macalester will all be looking to improve upon last year's results and strive to be one of the top four teams that qualify for the conference playoffs. The Cobbers return seven of their starters from a year ago and have all three of their top hitters back from last season. The Royals will be a very young team this season and they plan to rely heavily on their captains and seniors to maintain strong leadership. The Pipers will look to their lone senior captain senior Holly Wiborg for leadership in the 2007 season. Auggie first year head coach Tim Gormley, who has been a part of seven NCAA Division III national tournament teams in his nine years of collegiate coaching, will look to use that experience to lead the Auggies to a winning season. The Carleton Knights will look to the pitching duo of sophomore Mari Jo Long and senior Liesl Van Ryswyk to lead them from the mound. With just one senior on the roster and six juniors, the Oles will rely on a balance of youth and experience on the diamond this spring. Rounding out the MIAC schools is Macalester who is planning to move up in the MIAC standings in 2007 behind the strength of a solid group of newcomers.


The 2007 MIAC Softball Playoffs will be held May 4-5 at Bethel and Hamline Universities. The top four teams at the end of the conference regular season qualify for the playoffs and the winner of the tournament receives the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2007 NCAA Tournament.

### 2007 MIAC Preseason Softball Coach's Poll

(First Place Votes in Parentheses)

1. St. Thomas (11)
2. Gustavus (1)
3. Saint Mary's
4. Saint Benedict
5. St. Catherine
6. Concordia
7. Bethel
8. Hamline
9. Augsburg
10. (tie) Carleton
10. (tie) St. Olaf
12. Macalester


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<b>Augsburg College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Tim Gormley, 1st Season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	9-13 MIAC (Tied - 7th Place) / 16-22 Overall	


<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<p><b>Tiffany Magnuson</b> (So., INF/OF, Green Bay, Wis./Notre Dame Academy)</p> <p><b>Jolene Ross</b> (Jr., INF, Arden Hills, Minn./Mounds View)</p> <p><b>Jacci Mattern</b> (So., OF/P, Lakeville, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Kati Tweeten</b> (Sr., P/INF, Spring Grove, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Sarah Green</b> (So., P/INF, Winnebago, Minn./Blue Earth Area)</p> <p><b>Ashley Westerman</b> (Jr., C/INF, Bemidji, Minn.)</p>
<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>For the Augsburg College softball team, the 2007 season will be one of transition.</p> <p>Tim Gormley will begin his first season as a collegiate head coach this year, becoming just the third head coach in the 33-year history of the Auggie softball program. Gormley brings solid credentials to his new position at Augsburg. He served as an assistant coach under John Tschida for nine seasons -- three seasons (1996-98) at Saint Mary's University and six seasons (2000-06) at the University of St. Thomas.</p> <p>He takes over an Augsburg program that finished 16-22 last season, 9-13 in MIAC play. Six starters and nine letterwinners return to the lineup this season. There's not a lot of depth in the 14-player roster, but there is veteran leadership and talent on the roster, giving Gormley hope for continued improvement throughout the season.</p> <p>The middle of the infield is solid, with all-conference selections Tiffany Magnuson (So., Green Bay, Wis./Notre Dame Academy HS) at second base and Jolene Ross (Jr., Arden Hills, Minn./Mounds View HS) at shortstop. Magnuson, an All-MIAC selection last season, hit .367 with 10 RBI, six triples, one home run and two doubles, a .541 slugging percentage and a .447 on-base percentage. She also had a team-high 15 stolen bases in 16 attempts. Ross, an All-MIAC selection in 2005, hit .311 last season and enters her junior campaign with a .317 career batting average.</p> <p>The corners of the infield will be occupied by seniors Kati Tweeten (Sr., Spring Grove, Minn.) and Trista Gundersen (Sr., Lino Lakes, Minn./Centennial HS), along with newcomer Averie Swanson (Fr., St. James, Minn.). Tweeten, a three-season starter, hit .243 last season with 11 RBI and 12 runs scored, while Gundersen started 17 of 29 games, hitting .234 with six runs scored. Swanson was an all-state honorable-mention selection last year at St. James, earning all-conference honors twice.</p> <p>Ashley Westerman (Jr., Bemidji, Minn.), two-year starter, will be the Auggies' primary catcher. She hit .282 last season with 11 RBI, 11 doubles and a triple. Swanson will also see some time at catcher, Gormley said.</p> <p>Several players will contend for time in the outfield. Key among them is returner Jacci Mattern (So., Lakeville, Minn.), who earned honorable-mention All-MIAC honors last season. She finished second on the team in hitting, with a .325 batting average , with 25 runs scored, six doubles, six triples (tied for second-most among MIAC players overall), 18 RBI, a .482 slugging percentage and a .374 on-base percentage. She also had 10 stolen bases in 13 attempts.</p> <p>Two players return with pitching experience -- Tweeten and Sarah Green (So., Winnebago, Minn./Blue Earth Area HS). Tweeten has appeared in 31 games in her career (89.0 innings), with a 6.29 earned-run-average in her career. She appeared in 12 games last season with a 4.72 ERA. Green pitched in 22 games last season, with a 5-8 record and 4.92 ERA. She struck out 37 batters. As a hitter in the designated player position, Green earned NFCA All-Midwest Region first-team honors, hitting .298 on the season with five runs scored, 10 doubles, three home runs and a team-high 25 RBI. She had a .500 slugging percentage and .402 on-base percentage with a team-high 16 walks. Newcomer Swanson will also contend for pitching time, along with Mattern.</p>

<b>Bethel University</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Rod Radcliffe, 3rd Season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	9-13 MIAC (Tied - 7th Place) / 20-20 Overall	
<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<b>Dani Larson</b> (Sr., 1B, Grand Marais , Minn.) <b>Hannah Subich</b> (Sr., OF, Mansfield , Ohio) <b>Christi Paulson</b> (Sr., P, Young America , Minn.) <b>Laura Naig</b> (Jr., C, Kasson , Minn.) <b>Amber Beasley</b> (So., INF, Medina , Minn.) <b>Karina Roe</b> (So., OF, Grey Eagle, Minn.)	

<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>The softball team continued their improvement last year under third-year head coach Rod Radcliffe as they finished with a 20-20 overall record and a 9-13 record in the MIAC while finishing tied for seventh place. The Royals said goodbye to three seniors in 2006 that were mainstays in the lineup for four seasons and will now look to eight upper classmen and 18 newcomers to carry this year's team. Radcliffe states, "No doubt we will be a very young team with a lot of new players playing important roles on our team. We will rely heavily on our captains and seniors to maintain strong leadership. Our focus is the same as the past two years; we want our athletes to have a great experience, be very competitive, play hard, and use their softball experience to prepare their lives spiritually. With 18 new members, every position will be up for grabs. Competition is healthy for a team and creates a positive atmosphere."</p> <p>The team will have to replace All-MIAC ace Angela Vedders who last season led the Royals with a 16-12 record and 2.82 ERA and finished her career with numerous school records. With Vedders returning as an assistant coach and eight different pitchers competing for mound time, Bethel is encouraged by their pitching situation. However, no one has a lot of experience at the college level on the staff, so this group will have to mature quickly for Bethel to have success. Returning pitchers include Christi Paulson (Sr., Young America, Minn.), Erin McLaughlin (So., Eagan, Minn.) and Sarah Modak (So., Califon, N.J.) while the team will be without Jennifer Lundgren (Jr., West Fargo, N.D.) who is recovering from knee surgery. The Royals also welcome freshman Nea Harkness (Winthrop, Minn.), Charitey Rowden (Shellsburg, Iowa), Chelsea Kopca (Andover, Minn.), Kelsey Simmons (Guernsey, Wyo.), and Sarah Ibanez (Aitkin, Minn.) who will figure into the mix. Coach Vedders along with returning assistant coach Kristin Lundeen look forward to working with this pitching staff.</p> <p>Captain Laura Naig (Jr., Kasson, Minn.) will have stiff competition for the catching position with newcomers Ashley Lindberg (Fr., Sartell, Minn.), Danae Hanf (Fr., Andover, Minn.), and transfer Molly Trombley (Jr., Stacy, Minn.). Naig finished last year with a .321 batting avg. to go with a .956 fielding percentage behind the plate. A position that was a question mark last season, could become a team strength this season.</p> <p>First base will be anchored once again by three-year starter Dani Larson (Sr., Grand Marais, Minn.) who played injured most of last year. Larson will be leaned on heavily as she brings the most experience back to the infield. She will be backed up by Ashley Johnson (Fr., Maple Grove, Minn.) and Stacey Nauman (So., Buffalo, Minn.).</p> <p>Replacing four year starter and All-MIAC honorable mention honoree Meaghan Nelson (SS) will be tough. Nelson played in 159 consecutive games and was steady both batting and fielding finishing with a career .273 batting avg. and 408 defensive assists. Captain Amber Beasley (So., Medina, Minn.) is the veteran of these positions and will look to carry over a strong freshman season that saw her hit .331 with 16 RBI and 19 stolen bases into this year. The spring will determine the positions as this will be a fun group to watch improve daily while they gain experience. Vying for these positions with Beasley will be Joslin Geisler (Jr. transfer, Grand Rapids, Minn.), Lauren Habisch (Fr. Lakeville, Minn.), Tonia Erickson (Fr., Welcome, Minn.), and Randiann Sather (Fr., Willmar, Minn.).</p> <p>The outfield is the most experienced group on the team and includes returning starters Kory Roe (So., Grey Eagle, Minn.) and captain Hannah Subich (Sr., Mansfield, Minn.). Subich finished last year with a .276 batting avg. and eight stolen bases while Roe added 15 RBI and seven stolen bases. Freshman vying for a position are Annie Beasley (Medina, Minn.), Lisa Patnode (Princeton, Minn.), and Alyssum Roe (Copper Center, Alaska).</p>
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<b>Carleton College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Amy Tenute, 10th Season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	5-17 MIAC (11th Place) / 11-25 Overall	

<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<p><b>Mari Jo Long</b> (So., P, Wilmette, Ill./New Trier)</p> <p><b>Liesl Van Ryswyk</b> (Sr., P, Claremont, Calif.)</p> <p><b>Shayna Simmons</b> (Jr., OF, Eagan, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Erica Bolan</b> (Sr., 1B, Northfield, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Carina Ellis</b> (Sr., 2B, Mahtomedi, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Emily Maland</b> (So., C, Brattleboro, Vt./Brattleboro Union)</p>
<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>After graduating six starters in the past two years, including some of the more decorated players in Carleton history, the Knights will be look to their youth to carry them in the 2007 season.</p> <p>The best of the youthful bunch is sophomore Mari Jo Long (Wilmette, Ill./New Trier), who returns after posting one of the best first-year seasons in Carleton history. The talented pitcher was 6-12 last season, but posted a 3.27 ERA and struck out 117 batters. Her strikeout total was eighth most in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC), which is made more impressive by the fact that she split innings with the now-graduated Caitlyn Cornell. Carleton head coach Amy Tenute will look for Long to handle the majority of the innings this season, which could allow for her to emerge as one of the elite pitchers in the conference.</p> <p>Liesl Van Ryswyk (Sr./Claremont, Calif.) will return to provide depth to the pitching rotation, as she looks to appear mostly in relief and also as a spot starter for the Knights. She compiled a 3.84 ERA in 31 innings of work a year ago.</p> <p>Junior Rhemi Abrams-Fuller (Spokane, Wash./Ferris) will move from third base to the outfield, and will look to anchor Carleton's offense. Abrams-Fuller, who figures to bat cleanup, was the team's best power hitter a year ago, as she hit .272 with three home runs, five doubles, and 14 RBI. Senior Shayna Simmons (Eagan, Minn.), Carleton's third-leading returning hitter, will shift from left field to center field, which leaves a corner outfield position up for grabs. Youngsters Andrea Duron (So./Claremont, Calif./Vivian Webb), Lisa Friedman (So./Pasadena, Calif./Wesleyan University), and Laura Stone (Fy./Winchester, Mass.) figure to battle for that final outfield spot.</p> <p>In the infield, the Knights will look to key veterans to provide leadership. Senior tri-captains Erica Bolan (Northfield, Minn.) and Carina Ellis (Mahtomedi, Minn.) will anchor the right side of the infield at first and second base, respectively. Bolan, who hit .276 a year ago, is Carleton's top returning hitter. Junior Elise Johnson (Grantsburg, Wis.) will start at shortstop, while first-year Michael Johnson (Minneapolis/Blake) figures to start right away at third base.</p> <p>Tri-captain sophomore Emily Maland (Brattleboro, Vt./Brattleboro Union) returns as Carleton's primary backstop, and she will be backed up by her classmate Aron Feingold (So./Berkeley, Calif./The College Preparatory School).</p> <p>If the Knights can ride the combination of Long's youthful arm and savvy veteran hitting, they may be able to make their first ever MIAC playoff appearance.</p>


<b>Concordia College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Stacey Holm, 5th season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	10-12 MIAC (6th Place) / 15-19 Overall	

<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<b>Kelli Niess</b> (Sr, SS, Rice, Minn./Sauk Rapids-Rice)
	<b>Shantelle Nogowski</b> (Sr, C, Twin Valley, Minn./Norman County East)
	<b>Amanda Johnson</b> (Jr, 2B, Grey Eagle, Minn./Long Prairie-Grey Eagle)
	<b>Jill Reinert</b> (So., P, Watertown, Minn./Watertown-Mayer)

<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>After finishing just two games shy of the MIAC playoffs in 2006, the 2007 Concordia fastpitch softball team is hungry to get their first taste of postseason action in program history. The Cobbers return seven of their starters from a year ago and have all three of their top hitters back from last season.</p> <p>The key to Concordia's success in 2007 will be to find a replacement to MIAC All-Conference pitcher Lindy Sparby who graduated in the spring. Sparby started 20 of the team's 34 overall games last year and 14 of the team's 22 conference games in 2006. She was able to keep the Cobbers in almost every game over the course of her career and ate up the majority of the innings in her three-year career at Concordia.</p> <p>The leading candidate to take over for Sparby is sophomore Jill Reinert (Watertown, Minn./Watertown-Mayer HS). Reinert posted a team-best 4.66 ERA in her limited action during her freshmen season. She also had 43 strikeouts in her 46.1 innings pitched en route to recording a 4-4 overall record. Reinert has been the team's No.1 pitcher through the start of the 2007 campaign. In the team's 10 games during their spring trip to Arizona, she started six games, struck out 44 in 40 innings pitched and picked up both of the Cobber victories.</p> <p>Lisa Kott (Sr., Bozeman, Mont.) is the only other returning player that has started a game for Concordia in the past two seasons. Kott appeared in seven games last season and started on six occasions. She posted an ERA of 5.89 and went 2-4 in 2006. Kott will be joined by a pair of freshmen in giving support to Reinert. Becki Zimmerman (Chokio, Minn./Chokio-Alberta HS) and Erin Johnson (Fargo, N.D./West Fargo HS) both saw action during the team's spring trip. Zimmerman had a team-best 3.82 ERA and appeared in two games and Johnson started one game and came on in two others and finished with a 6.00 ERA.</p> <p>The mainstay of the Cobber team in 2007 will be their offensive attack. Concordia returns their top three hitters from last season and five of the six hitters who averaged .250 or above last year. Kelli Niess (Rice, Minn./Sauk Rapids-Rice HS) returns after an MIAC All-Conference season in 2006. The team's leadoff hitter has a career .340 average and last year led the team in batting average (.373), runs scored (28), hits (41) and stolen bases (20). Niess led the team during their Arizona trip as she hit .417 after playing in all 10 of the team's games. She will also be the anchor of the team's infield. Niess has shown great range from her shortstop position throughout her career at Concordia.</p> <p>Catcher Shantelle Nogowski (Twin Valley, Minn./Norman County East HS) had a breakout season in 2006. After hitting just .218 in her first two seasons at Concordia, she cranked up a .337 average in 2006 and was named to the MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention Team. She finished second behind Niess in almost every offensive category. She led the team in on-base percentage (.443) and walks (16) in 2006 and was second on the team in batting average (.337), slugging percentage (.506), RBI's (22) and stolen bases (4).</p> <p>After Niess and Nogowski, head coach Stacey Holm will rely on Amanda Johnson (Jr., Grey Eagle, Minn./Long Prairie-Grey Eagle HS) and Amanda Michaelson (So., Shoreview, Minn./Mounds View HS) to come through at the top of the order. Johnson led the team in slugging percentage (.645), home runs (6) and total bases (60) in 2006. She was also second on the team in runs scored (24) and hits (30). Johnson is the team's starting second baseman and made only three errors in 150 chances to post a team-best .980 fielding percentage. Michaelson returns for her second season as the team's starting third baseman. She hit .269 last year as a freshman and will be slated into the No.2 spot in the batting order.</p> <p>If the Cobbers can have some of the other players who are getting a chance to play for the first time in their careers or any of the top-notch freshmen step up and contribute at the plate, then Concordia will have a serious chance to be playing in their first playoff game in school history.</p>
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<b>Gustavus Adolphus College</b>			
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Jeff Annis, 2nd Season		

<b>2006 Record:</b>	19-3 MIAC (Tied - 2nd Place) / 31-9 Overall	
<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<b>Joyce DeWitz</b> (Sr., P, Good Thunder, Minn.)  <b>Julie Mahre</b> (Jr., 2B, White Bear Lake, Minn.)  <b>Rachael Click</b> (So., SS, Rochester, Minn.)	
<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>The Gustavus women's softball team returns seven starters from a team that posted a mark of 31-9 and finished second in the MIAC last season. Coach Jeff Annis, who is beginning his second year directing the program, is expecting that his team will battle top ranked St. Thomas for the conference title and put themselves in a position to be selected to participate in the NCAA Tournament. Senior pitcher Joyce DeWitz, junior second baseman Julie Mahre, and sophomore shortstop Rachael Click will lead the Gusties. Senior Abby Bernstein will handle the majority of the catching duties. She will be assisted by junior Erin Ge.</p> <p>DeWitz, who enters the season set to break every Gustavus pitching mark, established herself as one of the top pitchers in the region last year with a mark of 21-6 and a 1.59 earned run average. DeWitz will anchor a young staff that includes sophomore Bree Lindenberg, and newcomers Callie Nelsen and Betsie Collins.</p> <p>The infield will need to replace All-America first baseman Audrey Lenocho, however it returns all-region second baseman Julie Mahre and 2006 MIAC Rookie of the Year Rachael Click. Mahre and Click are both very strong defensively and they allow DeWitz the opportunity to take some chances on the mound. Junior Allison Haase will take over full-time duties at third base after sharing time last season, while the first base spot will likely be shared by senior Tina Strauss and first year Jenna Johnson.</p> <p>In the outfield, sophomore Emily Klein returns after hitting .260 and starting every game in right field last season. Klein will move to center field to replace Mary Furlong who has graduated. The rest of the outfield positions are up for grabs. Those competing for playing time include junior Erin Ge (who is also a catcher), junior Kelsey Droogsma, sophomore Allie Morem, and first year Andrea Brown.</p>	


<b>Hamline University</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Janelle Tieken, 9th Season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	7-15 MIAC (10th Place) / 19-21 Overall	
<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<b>Theresa Boleen</b> (So., P, White Bear Lake, Minn./Stillwater)  <b>Holly Wiborg</b> (Sr., INF, Chanhassen, Minn./Chaska)  <b>Jourdan Ulrich</b> (So., INF, Apple Valley, Minn./Eastview)  <b>Grace Weinreich</b> (So., OF, Wahkon, Minn./Isle)  <b>Sarah Dittberner</b> (So., INF, Forest Lake, Minn.)	




<b>Season Preview:</b>	After a disappointing season in 2006, the 2007 Hamline University fastpitch softball team will look to "get a little bit better everyday."
	Along with moving up in the MIAC ranks the team will also focus on team unity. Coaches have already seen a drastic improvement in the team's cohesiveness since the fall, crediting the leadership skills of senior Holly Wiborg (Chanhassen, Minn.) with this success. "As our lone captain, Holly's leadership has blossomed. She has matured and made many strides to lead our team on a path towards success," assistant coach Aaron Vail said.
	Wiborg will also look to returning sophomores Jourdan Ulrich (Apple Valley, Minn.), Grace Weinreich (Wahkon, Minn.), Sarah Dittberner (Forest Lake, Minn.), and Theresa Boleen (White Bear Lake, Minn.) for leadership on and off the field.
	In 2006, Ulrich started all 38 games for the Pipers and returns to second base with a .328 batting average. She will also see time in the outfield.
	Weinreich returns as a huge force at bat. She finished her first season for the Pipers with a .468 slugging percentage. After 111 at bats, Weinreich had 32 hits, six doubles, one triple, four homeruns, and 30 RBIs. She returns as the team leader in homeruns and RBIs.
	Dittberner also had a successful first-year for the Pipers. After starting 37 games, she had three doubles, two homeruns, and 10 RBIs off of 25 hits. She will move to first base after playing mostly in the outfield in 2006.
	Boleen was the team's only pitcher in 2006 and was named All-Conference honorable mention after pitching 232 innings. She led the MIAC in innings pitched and tied for third in the conference in wins (19) and was fourth in strikeouts (155). She finished her first season as a Piper second on Hamline's all-time list for pitching wins.

<b>Macalester College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Tom Cross, 4th Season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	1-21 MIAC (12th place) / 3-33 Overall	
<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<b>Katie Grudnowski</b> (Jr., INF, Minnetonka, Minn./Blake School) <b>Kate Ziegler</b> (So., INF, Oak Park, Ill./Oak Park-River Forest)	


<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>Macalester is looking to turn the corner this year behind the strength of a solid group of newcomers and begin to move up in the MIAC. Last year the Scots showed some improvement from the season before, reducing total errors committed by 38 and boosting the team batting average by 37 points. Similar improvements are expected in '07 under fourth-year head coach Cross.</p> <p>There are 10 first-years and four sophs on this very young team and several newcomers will be called on to play big roles right away. About half of the team's starters could be first-years.</p> <p>"This group of first-years has both numbers and ability," commented Coach Cross. "It's time for our program to take a big step in the right direction and I believe a lot of good things will happen in the near future with this group."</p> <p>Katie Grudnowski (Jr., Minnetonka, Minn. / Blake School) has been one of team's top players the past two years and is coming off a season where she hit .284 while playing solid shortstop. She led the team in runs scored in each of the previous two seasons and led the team in hits last year. Kate Ziegler (So., Oak Park, Ill. / Oak Park-River Forest) led the Scots in hitting last year as a frosh with a .308 mark and was second to Grudnowski with 28 hits. Kristen Mainz (Sr., Farmington, Minn.) returns for a fourth season to the pitching staff, where she joins top pitching prospects Olivia Abbot (Fy., Lakewood, Colo. / Green Mountain) and Ali Nystrom (Fy., Minnetonka, Minn.).</p> <p>Mac's 10 newcomers will have a big impact on how well the team will do this season. In addition to pitching, Abbot will play third base and Nystrom will play in the outfield. Sarah Halloran (Fy., Sunderland, Mass. / Williston-Northampton) and Crystal Barriga (Fy., Broomfield, Colo. / Legacy) will handle the catching duties. Macalester outfield prospects include Amana Cagan (Fy., Saratoga, Calif. / Monte Vista) and Alison Phillips (Fy., Vernon Hills, Ill. / Adlai E. Stevenson).</p> <p>Macalester will play its games this year at the Dunning Softball Complex on Concordia Avenue between Hamline and Lexington in the Midway area of St. Paul.</p>
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College of Saint Benedict		
Head Coach:	Denny Johnson, 21st Season	
2006 Record:	12-10 MIAC (Tied - 4th Place) / 15-21 Overall	
Key Athletes:	<p><b>Monica Eiden</b> (Sr., P, Maple Grove, Minn./Totino Grace)</p> <p><b>Christina Gardner</b> (Sr., P/1B, Arvada, Colo./Holy Family)</p> <p><b>Brittney Johnson</b> (Sr., 2B, St. Cloud, Minn./Tech)</p> <p><b>Nikki Zappa</b> (Sr., C, Elk River, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Jinnie Regli</b> (Sr., OF, Lakeville, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Patty Devoy</b> (Sr., 3B, Mendota Heights, Minn./Visitation)</p>	


<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>In 2006 the Blazers tallied a 15-21 overall record with a 12-10 MIAC mark, which qualified them to compete in the MIAC Playoff Tournament.</p> <p>This spring Saint Benedict looks to make back-to-back tournament appearances by returning a pair of senior All-MIAC pitchers which include Christina Gardner (Arvada, Colo. / Holy Family) and Monica Eiden (Maple Grove, Minn. / Totino Grace). Both pitchers gained experience last year and will be called upon to provide the Blazers with consistency on the mound.</p> <p>Gardner also returns as one of the team's offensive threats at the plate. Gardner batted .265 in 2006 with a team high 22 runs batted in.</p> <p>Senior catcher Nikki Zappa (Elk River, Minn. / Elk River) will be in charge of keeping the pitching staff under control and effective this spring. Zappa is also expected to be a contributor at the plate by bringing in runs with consistent hitting.</p> <p>Senior Brittney Johnson (St. Cloud, Minn. / St. Cloud Tech) will anchor the infield from the second base position this spring for the Blazers.</p> <p>Senior outfielder Jinnie Regli (Lakeville, Minn. / Lakeville) will be the only returning starter in the outfield. Regli will make the move to centerfield where she hopes to use her speed and glove skills to take away "would-be" hits from opposing batters.</p> <p>Junior Patty Devoy (Mendota Heights, Minn. / Visitation) had a break-out year at the plate in 2006 with 16 hits, six of which were for extra bases. Devoy will continue her progression at the plate while providing the Blazers with defense at the third base position.</p> <p>Head coach Denny Johnson will begin his 21st season of coaching the Blazer softball team and hopes that this season his team will be able to build off the accomplishments of last year.</p> <p>CSB also added another strong group of first-year athletes including Kendra Zapzalka (Holdingford, Minn. / Holdingford), Sarah Haugen (St. Cloud, Minn. / St. Cloud Apollo), Trisha La Vigne (Foley, Minn. / Foley), Chelsea Wilson (Rosemount, Minn. / Rosemount), Beth Hanson (Faribault, Minn. / Bethlehem Academy), Maggie Plog (Savage, Minn. / Academy of Holy Angels ) and Shannon Eveland (Maple Grove, Minn. / Maple Grove).</p>
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<b>College of St. Catherine</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Madge Makowske, 12th Season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	12-10 MIAC (Tied - 4th Place) / 21-18 Overall	
<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<b>Jess Lewandowski</b> (Sr., P, Vadnais Heights, Minn./Mounds View) <b>Shannon Bagwill</b> (So., 2B, Cottage Grove, Minn./Park Senior) <b>Kayla Webster</b> (Fy., Util., Billings, Mont.)	

<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>The Wildcats are hoping that the 2007 season is a continuation of the strides that were made in the 2006 season. Last year's campaign saw the Wildcats miss the MIAC playoffs by just one game. It is the goal of this year's squad to make sure that a position in the conference playoffs is secured.</p> <p>The Wildcats return the core of their team from last season including all-conference performers Jess Lewandowski and Shannon Bagwill. Lewandowski batted .384 last season and her 43 hits lead the Wildcats. Bagwill started every game last season and her 23 RBI's was second on the team.</p> <p>Last season, the Wildcats had a team batting average of .320, good enough for second in the MIAC, and their 2.20 team ERA was fourth in the conference. The Wildcats return their leading hitters as well as pitching and are looking forward to a good first year class with the hopes of improving on last season's record and statistics.</p> <p>"We made some good strides as a program last year, I think we built a great foundation to build on," stated Wildcat head coach Madge Makowske. "With the players we have back as well as our incoming class, I think we have a team that can make some noise in the conference this season," added Makowske.</p>
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<b>Saint Mary's University</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Jen Miller, 1st Season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	19-3 MIAC (Tied - 2nd Place) / 25-15-1 Overall	
<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<p><b>Nikki Jung</b> (Sr., 3B/C, Inver Grove Heights, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Tara Close</b> (Sr., 1B, North St. Paul, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Megan Wallisch</b> (Jr., P, Loveland, Colo.)</p> <p><b>Erin Leone</b> (So., P, Farmington, Minn.)</p>	

<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>When Jen Miller stepped on the softball diamond, her mission was simple - win.</p> <p>And win she did.</p> <p>After helping guide Winona Cotter to a 125-26 record and a pair of state tournament appearances during her high school days, Miller and success teamed up again at Saint Mary's University, where the four-year starter was a part of two NCAA national tournament teams, including the school's first-ever national-championship squad in 2000.</p> <p>Her playing days have come and gone, but Miller is still driven by that same mission to win each and every time she takes the field.</p> <p>Only this time, Miller must do her winning from a different position, as the Cardinals' head coach.</p> <p>"My approach is the same (this year) as it has been every other year I've been here, and that's to do my part to put a winning program on the field," said Miller, who made the jump from assistant to head coach in July, after then-head coach Nikki Fennern accepted the position as SMU's athletic director. "When I was a player I always made sure I worked hard and gave it everything I've got, and I expect the same of my players."</p> <p>Miller inherits a team that went 19-3 in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and qualified for the conference tournament. And while the loss of All-MIAC selections Jenny Schipp and Jenni Gutterman to graduation leaves a gaping hole in the middle of the infield, the Cardinals do return their other seven starters from last year's 25-15-1 team.</p> <p>"There's no way you can replace Schipp and Gutterman, they were the leaders of this team last year, both on the field and off," said Miller, who does return All-MIAC and All-Region third baseman Nikki Jung (Inver Grove Heights, Minn.), as well as honorable-mention All-MIAC performers Tara Close (North St. Paul, Minn.), Erin Leone (Farmington, Minn.) and Jenny Giannini (River Grove, Ill.). "But every year you have changes to your lineup and you have to make adjustments. We've got a number of very talented returners, not to mention a good group of freshmen, that will, hopefully, be able to pick up the slack."</p>
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<b>St. Olaf College</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	Ruthie Neuger, 3rd Season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	8-14 MIAC (9th Place) / 14-24 Overall	
<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<p><b>Jenny Beiersdorf</b> (Jr. Plymouth, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Emily Hennig</b> (Jr. St. Paul, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Katie Rodd</b> (Jr. Cloquet, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Janae Fabini</b> (Jr. Duluth, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Paige Olson</b> (Fy, Brainerd, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Jill Jarvis</b> (Fy. Faribault, Minn.)</p>	

<b>Season Preview:</b>	<p>The St. Olaf women's fastpitch team will look to a large group of underclassmen to succeed in 2007. With just one senior on the roster and six juniors, the Oles will rely on a balance of youth and experience on the diamond this spring.</p> <p>The Oles, losing two senior pitchers last season, will rely on a trio of pitchers this spring. Jenny Beiersdorf (Jr. Plymouth, Minn.), Erin Johnson (So. Shakopee, Minn.), and Jeanette Strommen (Fy. Brooklyn Park, Minn.) will all share time toeing the rubber for the Oles. Johnson was 1-0 in 10 appearances last season with the Oles, and carried a 3.52 ERA over 20.1 innings. Beiersdorf was also 1-0, with a 2.70 ERA in 3.1 innings.</p> <p>Behind the dish, the Oles will look to Emily Hennig (Jr. St. Paul, Minn.) and Alli Berens (Fy, Shakopee, Minn.) to fill the cleats of two-time all-MIAC selection Lindsay Weier. Hennig spent most of last season out in the field, but will be looked upon to provide an experienced offensive threat from behind the dish. Hennig finished last season tied for the team lead in batting average among players who had more than 50 plate appearances (.324 in 102 at-bats) and first on the team in triples, RBIs, and slugging percentage (6, 22, and .529). Berens, a two-time all conference selection at Holy Family Catholic High School, will also be looked upon to inherit the defensive leadership role of the catcher.</p> <p>In the infield the Oles will turn to a pair of juniors up the middle. Katie Rodd (Jr. Cloquet, Minn.) and Janae Fabini (Jr. Duluth, Minn.), who shared time at second base last season, will anchor the young defense. Rodd also hit .255 in just 51 plate appearances, with two doubles.</p> <p>The Oles will look to utilize their speed and youth in the outfield. Paige Olson (Fy, Brainerd, Minn.) will roam center field for the Oles. Olson, a two-time all-conference selection at Brainerd High School and defensive MVP as a senior, brings speed and a strong arm to the Ole outfield, as well as brining a solid bat to the plate for the Oles. Flanking Olson in the outfield will be Jill Jarvis (Fy. Faribault, Minn.). Jarvis was an all-conference selection at Faribault High School as a junior, and an honorable mention as a senior.</p> <p>The Oles will kick off their season on the 8th of March in Rosemount, Minn., where they will take on Waldorf College. The Oles next games will come on the road in Tucson, Ariz., as the Oles will play three games each against Pacific Lutheran University, Eastern Oregon, and Graceland College, for a total of nine games between March 24th and March 29th. The Oles open up MIAC play on April 1st, when they host Carleton on Mabel Shirley Field at 1 p.m.</p>
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<b>University of St. Thomas</b>		
<b>Head Coach:</b>	John Tschida , 7th Season	
<b>2006 Record:</b>	21-1 MIAC (1st Place) / 48-4 Overall	
<b>Key Athletes:</b>	<p><b>Maria Bye</b> (Jr., RHP, Maple Plain, Minn./Orono)</p> <p><b>Carrie Embree</b> (Sr., LHP/1B, Waukee, Iowa)</p> <p><b>Fiona Lodge</b> (Jr., INF, Duluth, Minn./East)</p> <p><b>Missy Bruggeman</b> (So., OF/INF, Greenbush, Minn./Middle River)</p> <p><b>Colleen Owen</b> (So., OF, Lakeville, Minn.)</p> <p><b>Kaitlin Wightman</b> (So., SS/2B, Forest Lake, Minn.)</p>	

**Season  
Preview:**

St. Thomas graduated two of the best players in Division III history yet still finds itself ranked No. 1 again in Division III softball. Despite numerous new faces on the field and in the batting order, the Toms won the 24-team NFCA Leadoff Classic March 9-11.

St. Thomas is a combined 128-14 vs. conference foes in softball and baseball over the last three seasons (72-3 softball, 56-11 baseball), including a 15-1 postseason run. Since 2002, St. Thomas softball is 114-5 vs. MIAC opposition -- 9-4 vs. Gustavus (four one-run losses) and 105-1 vs. everyone else.

Coach John Tschida is the winningest coach in NCAA Division III softball with an 11-year head coaching mark of 449-83 (.842). He's starting his seventh season at St. Thomas (242-38 overall, 128-7 MIAC here), where he's won five conference titles and twice has been named National Coach of the Year. Tschida coached his 500th college game last April. In his last 10 seasons at St. Mary's and St. Thomas, Tschida's teams are 219-12 vs. conference foes and have swept 100 of 110 doubleheaders, splitting nine while being swept just once.

Tschida will see if his young Tommie team can continue his program's amazing run this decade. The Tommies have won six of the last seven regular-season conference titles. They've also won all three MIAC playoff titles with a combined 9-0 record since the format began in 2004. UST has made the NCAA regional tournament nine of the last 10 seasons, and have placed fifth, first, first and second at nationals since 2002. Last May, the Toms lost two one-run games to NCAA champ Rutgers-Camden and took second nationally. That ended the Toms' three-year postseason win streak at 29.

The Tommies graduated four starters from that 48-4 team which tied a D-III record for season wins, shattered the D-III season record for home runs with 73, placed second in the nation, and won 24 of 25 MIAC games. Two-time All-Americans Janet Nagle and Nikki Conway are now on the coaching staff after leading UST to a 169-20 record in their era. Conway broke the NCAA Division III career record for runs (229) and also finished third in home runs (48). She's the second player in Division III history to surpass 40 HRs, 200 runs and 200 hits. In 23 career NCAA postseason games against elite pitching, she led the Tommies to a 21-2 record as she batted .492 with 38 hits, 32 RBI, 31 runs, eight doubles, two triples, nine HRs and a 1.000 slugging percentage. She broke conference record for homers (season and career) plus walks, extra-base hits and runs in a career. Nagle finished second in Division III career winning percentage at .923 with 84-7 record (81 wins last three seasons). She was a three-time 3X MIAC Pitcher of the Year (44-1 all-time against conference opponents), and her 696 strikeouts is a conference best.

Junior All-American pitcher Maria Bye and senior All-American infielder Carrie Embree lead the returners. At the plate last season, Embree led Division III with 80 hits in 52 games. Her .519 batting average -- including an impressive .667 clip in 22 conference games -- also ranked among the Division III leaders. Bye batted .403 with 59 RBI, 12 home runs, 56 hits, 35 runs, six doubles, 19 walks, a .705 slugging percentage and just two errors in 143 defensive chances. Bye hit safely in 11 of 12 postseason games in 2006. Embree and sophomore Kallie Samuelson will back up Bye in pitching.

UST has its biggest roster ever with 29 players.