

# 2009 MIAC Softball Season Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. -- As teams wrap up their spring break trips and indoor practices, softball student-athletes around the MIAC know that the opportunity to take to the diamond on their home field is just around the corner. The MIAC softball season will again feature an intense battle for one of the four conference playoffs spots and the challenge for the title of "2009 MIAC Softball Champion."

St. Thomas enters the 2009 season atop the preseason coaches' poll earning 11 first-place votes. The Tommies, winners of the last five MIAC titles, return senior second baseman Kaitlyn Wightman and junior outfielder Alison Wright, both All-Americans in 2008. Gustavus, runner-up to St. Thomas each of the last three seasons, feature senior All-Region performers in shortstop Rachael Click and center fielder Emily Klein.

Every starter returns to a Hamline team that placed third last season, led by four-year starter and All-MIAC center fielder Jourdan Ulrich. Augsburg will look to carry the momentum built during last season's fourth place finish to this year, but the Auggies will again have a young roster with just three seniors on their roster. Returning almost the entire starting lineup, Saint Mary's will look to get back into the MIAC Playoffs in 2009 led by All-Region selection Cassie Otte.

Coming off their most successful season in over 10 years, Bethel looks to break into the conference's top four, led by their talented pitching staff. Saint Benedict, under the direction of head coach Denny Johnson in his 23rd season, will look to move up in the conference standings with a relatively young squad led by All-MIAC senior outfielder Jillian Rigg. St. Catherine will also feature a youthful team, but the Wildcats return a talented group of players from last season's roster.

St. Olaf will look to continue their steady improvement in the MIAC standings as the Oles will lean on junior Ali Berens, a two-time All-MIAC infielder. First-year head coach Megan Johnson will lead Concordia in 2009, her Cobbers return All-MIAC catcher Amanda Michaelson. A brand new field on campus will welcome Macalester back home as the Scots feature a roster of several three-year starters. Carleton will look to use the experience gained last season to move up in the conference standings, lead by three veteran leaders and a host of newcomers.

The 2009 MIAC Softball Playoffs will be played in Winona, Minn. on Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2. Hosted by Saint Mary's, the playoffs will be a four-team double elimination tournament.

## 2009 MIAC Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (1 for first, 2 for second, etc.) Teams are ranked in order of lowest point total to highest with first place votes shown in parentheses.

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

**2009 MIAC Playoffs:** Top four teams (double elimination) - Friday - Saturday, May 1-2 in Winona, Minn. (Hosted by Saint Mary's).