

2004 MIAC VOLLEYBALL PREVIEW

The 2004 MIAC volleyball season gets underway with non-conference games beginning September 1. Conference play begins September 15, with teams competing against each other one time in MIAC play.

The St. Thomas volleyball team is ranked 16th in the NCAA Division III preseason top-25 poll by the American Volleyball Coaches' Association (AVCA). Concordia-Moorhead is the only other MIAC team in the poll at No. 24. Last year's MIAC Playoff champion and conference regular-season runner up, Concordia-Moorhead, topped the conference coaches preseason poll with 17 points, garnering eight of the 12 first-place votes. St. Thomas, the two-time defending regular season champion, received three first-place votes and 32 points. Saint Mary's and Carleton tied for third with 42 points each, followed by Gustavus and Bethel in a tie for fifth with 72 points.

The MIAC Volleyball Playoffs will use the same format as last year and all playoff games will begin at 7:00p.m. The top six teams from the MIAC regular season again qualify for the playoffs. Quarterfinals will take place on Tuesday, November 2. The #1 and #2 seeds will host semifinal matches on Thursday, Nov. 4 and the highest remaining seed will host the championship match Saturday, Nov. 6. The winner of the playoff will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament.

MIAC Volleyball Preseason Coaches Poll

First place votes in () / 1 point was assigned for every first place vote, 2 for second, etc.

1. Concordia (8) - 17 pts
2. St Thomas (3) - 32 pts
3. (tie) Saint Mary's and Carleton - 42 pts
5. (tie) Gustavus and Bethel - 72 pts
7. Saint Benedict (1) - 79 pts
8. Macalester - 92 pts
9. St Olaf - 97 pts
10. Hamline - 115 pts
11. Augsburg - 133 pts
12. St. Catherine - 143 pts

2004 MIAC Volleyball Playoffs		
Quarterfinals November 2 #6 @ #3 - 7:00pm #5 @ #4 - 7:00pm Byes: #1, #2	Semifinals November 4 Winner #3/6 @ #2 - 7:00pm Winner #4/5 @ #1 - 7:00pm	Championship November 6 Championship - 7:00pm

Augsburg College	
Head Coach:	Cathy Skinner (2nd - AUG (6th overall) / 3-24 at AUG)
2003 Record:	3-24 (1-10 MIAC / 11th)
Key Returners:	<p>Kristy Larson (MB, Sr., 5-11, Pine Island, Minn.), led team in kills (191, 2.25 KPG) and attack percentage (.208), 3rd in blocks (45, 14 solo, 0.53 BPG) and aces (25) in 2003; lone senior on roster.</p> <p>Linnea Evans (OH, Jr., 5-10, Kenyon, Minn./Kenyon-Wanamingo HS), 188 kills (2.35 KPG), .064 attack percentage, 26 aces, led team in digs (224, 2.80 DPG) in 2003.</p> <p>Billie Painschab (MH, Jr., 5-11, Howard Lake, Minn./Howard Lake-Waverly HS), led team in blocks (81, 10 solo, 0.91 BPG), also 103 kills (1.16 KPG), .109 attack percentage and 18 aces in 2003.</p> <p>Alexis Johnson (S, Jr., 5-3, Oakdale, Minn./North St. Paul HS), led team in setting (489 assists, 6.19 APG) and aces (29), 3rd on team in digs (165, 2.09 DPG) in 2003.</p> <p>Britt Bogner (MH, Jr., 5-10, Burnsville, Minn./Apple Valley HS), 4th on team in kills (113, 1.71 KPG) in 2003; .044 attack percentage, 2nd on team in digs (167, 2.53 DPG), 23 aces in 2003.</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 5/8</p>

Season Preview:	<p>Progress can be measured in steps for the Augsburg College volleyball team.</p> <p>Last season, new head coach Cathy Skinner joined the program, bringing more than a decade of Division I volleyball experience to the Auggies. And though Augsburg finished with the same number of match victories as in 2002 -- three -- there were still significant signs of improvement in skills and technique.</p> <p>This season, with the bulk of the lineup returning, along with one of the most talented and experienced recruiting classes in recent years, Augsburg is aiming for another step of progress in 2004, to improve upon last season's 3-24 overall record and 1-10 mark in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.</p> <p>"I'm looking forward to having a team that has solid defensive skills and good passing, and those two fundamentals will help us to run an improved offense. It's going to be a lot of fun," Skinner said. "We need to learn how to win again. We have a lot of kids coming in from programs where they've been very successful, and they want to continue that success."</p> <p>Augsburg returns five starters to its lineup from last season, a group featuring just one senior. Skinner said that the group has plenty of talent and showed improvement while adjusting to her new system last year.</p> <p>The lone senior, middle hitter Kristy Larson (Sr., Pine Island, Minn.), has established herself as a consistent all-around player and team leader, Skinner said. Larson led the Auggies with 191 kills and a .208 attack percentage last year, while also scoring 25 blocks and 25 service aces.</p> <p>A strong class of juniors returns, led by left-side hitter Linnea Evans (Jr., Kenyon, Minn./Kenyon-Wanamingo HS), who contributed 188 kills and a team-high 224 digs last year.</p> <p>Middle hitter Billie Painschab (Jr., Howard Lake, Minn./Howard Lake-Waverly HS) showed tremendous improvement in her skills last year, ending up with 103 kills and a team-high 81 blocks (10 solo). Olivia Porter (So., Rochester, Minn./Mayo HS), the lone sophomore on the roster, should also show improvement in the middle for the Auggies.</p> <p>Britt Bogner (Jr., Burnsville, Minn./Apple Valley HS) played on the left side last season and contributed 113 kills, 167 digs and 23 service aces. She will join returner Kirstie Zitzow (Jr., Dover, Minn./Dover-Eyota HS), who improved in a reserve role last year.</p> <p>Setter Alexis Johnson (Jr., Oakdale, Minn./North St. Paul HS) showed strong improvement in her first season of seeing significant starting time, averaging 6.19 blocks per game in a platoon role in 2003. This year, Skinner is aiming to continue that positive development of Johnson's skills.</p> <p>An impressive recruiting class of eight talented newcomers will enter the Auggie volleyball program this year. All the newcomers in Skinner's first big recruiting class saw significant action in club volleyball, in addition to putting up good numbers in high school.</p> <p>Complete Augsburg preview can be found at: http://www.augsburg.edu/athletics/volleyball/0405preview.html</p>
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Bethel University	
Head Coach:	Gretchen Hunt (4th season / 66-36 overall)
2003 Record:	17-17 (7-4 MIAC / 3rd-tie)
Key Returners:	<p>Katie Snyder, Jr., Setter 5-7, Alexandria, MN</p> <p>Kimmie Moehring, Jr., OH 5-10, Minnetonka, MN</p> <p>Lisa Otto, Jr., MB 5-9, Plymouth, MN</p> <p>Lauren Paist, Jr., Utility 5-8, Wheaton, IL.</p> <p>Marin Rosenvold, So., OH/Opp. 5-11, West Fargo, ND.</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 4/8</p>

Season Preview:	<p>After an up-and-down season in 2003, that included a 17-17 overall record but a 3rd place finish in the MIAC and a 10-4 record over the last 14 matches of the season, the Royals are looking to find the consistency that led them to winning over 20 matches in each of Coach Hunt's first two seasons. "Last year we struggled to find the line-up that could win on a consistent basis until late in the season," says Coach Hunt, "we will use what we learned from last season to build a strong and united team this year."</p> <p>Bethel already has a solid foundation in the team leadership. Junior tri-captains Kimmie Moehring (Minnetonka, MN), Katie Snyder (Alexandria, MN) and Lauren Paist (Wheaton, IL) have set the pace in spring workouts. "All of the players have been working very hard over the spring and summer, and that is certainly a reflection of the example that our captains have set," says Coach Hunt.</p> <p>Snyder will be expected to run the offense at the setter position, after tallying 1469 assists last year (falling one assist short of breaking the Bethel single-season record) and being a leader in the MIAC in assists per game, Katie has established herself as one of the top setters in the conference and will be one of the more experienced players at that position in 2004. Moehring is expected to start again for the Royals, as she has every year since her freshman year. She will carry a heavy load as a primary passer and defensive player, along with being one of the primary offensive options. "Kimmie really came on at the end of last season during our playoff run and was dominant in those games," says Coach Hunt, "I anticipate that she will pick-up right where she left off." Paist will continue to play the role of utility player, backing up Snyder and also playing wherever the team needs her. According to Coach Hunt, "Lauren is such a well-trained volleyball player that we can use her anywhere. She is fantastic defensively, but can also block and swing when necessary." Paist was a leader in the MIAC in aces per game in 2003.</p> <p>Along with the tri-captains, look to returning starters Marin Rosenvold (West Fargo, ND) and Lisa Otto (Plymouth, MN) to step into larger roles. Last year as a freshman, Rosenvold was a leader in the MIAC in hitting percentage during conference play as she tallied 222 kills from the opposite hitter position. Otto appeared in 33 matches for the Royals as a middle blocker and is the most experienced player at that position. "Lisa is really playing with increased confidence and has been very disciplined in her workouts," says Coach Hunt, "I expect to see a much improved player this fall."</p> <p>The newcomers will make-up a large and competitive group in 2004. Karissa Brouwer (Clara City, MN) and Beth Kalemkiarian (Lincoln, NE) will be sophomores at Bethel, but will be using their first year of eligibility in volleyball. The incoming freshmen include Amy Anderson (Alexandria, MN), Hannah Carlson (Copper Center, AK), Pam Feltmann (Norwood Young America, MN), Liz Glesne (Underwood, MN), Brooke Hesson (Vinton, IA), Ashley Lange (Abbotsford, WI), Alissa Martin (Williams Bay, WI), Laura Naig (Kasson, MN), Kayla Smith (Lakeville, MN), and Rachel Smith (Hutchinson, MN). "It's always tough to predict who will make the biggest impact from the newcomers," says Coach Hunt, "but there are several players with impressive athletic resumes who could challenge for playing time."</p> <p>The combination of talented youth and a core of experienced and dedicated veterans is expected to lead to a successful season for the Royals. Look for them to challenge again for a conference title and to return to a winning season.</p>
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Carleton College		
Head Coach:	Heidi Luehmann-Jaynes (6th season / 63-74 overall)	
2003 Record:	20-8 (7-4 MIAC / 3rd-tie)	
Key Returners:	<p>Katie Freeman, Sr., OH, Richfield, Minn. (Richfield HS), All-MIAC in 2003, led team with 2.72 kills and second with 4.55 digs per game.</p> <p>Beth Freeman, Sr., MH, Richfield, Minn. (Richfield HS), Led team with 1.36 blocks/game, third on team with 2.46 kills/game in 2003</p> <p>Danielle Hargreaves, So., OH, Brandon, Manitoba (Vincent Massey HS), Fourth on team with 2.30 kills/game, third with 3.33 digs/game, Winnipeg Sun Player of the Year in 2002-03</p> <p>Sarah Barrow, Sr., RH, Englewood, Colo. (Cherry Creek), 2.08 kills/game, 1.05 blocks/game in 2003</p> <p>Alivia Bryan, Jr., MH, Eugene, Ore. (Winston Churchill), 1.63 kills and .264 hitting percentage as reserve in 2003</p> <p>Jamie Lykken, Jr., L, Edina, Minn. Led team with 4.90 digs/game in 2003</p> <p>Jessica Black, Jr., OH, Greenwood Village, Colo. (Cherry Creek), 1.98 kills and 2.20 digs per game as reserve in 2003</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 4 + Libero /9</p>	

Season Preview:	<p>Dealing with high expectations hardly has been an issue for the Carleton College volleyball team, but that's exactly the case for sixth-year head coach Heidi Jaynes and the Knights heading into the 2004 campaign.</p> <p>The Knights, picked to finish seventh in last year's MIAC coaches' preseason poll, surprised everyone when they rallied to tie for third in the final MIAC regular season standings. Carleton's season-ending surge continued in the MIAC Playoffs, as the Knights played their way into the MIAC Playoffs title game, upsetting nationally-ranked University of St. Thomas along the way.</p> <p>The Knights finished that season 20-8 overall, 7-4 in the MIAC, marking their highest win total since 1988 and their highest winning percentage in more than two decades. The tie for third place was Carleton's best conference finish since 1985 and capped a three-year stretch where Carleton was 51-29 with a winning record each of those seasons, only the second time in program history that has occurred.</p> <p>With four starters and 11 letterwinners back off that team, however, the Knights won't sneak up on their opponents in 2004. The MIAC coaches revealed this fact by voting Carleton into a tie for third place in the preseason conference poll, behind defending MIAC Playoff champion Concordia-Moorhead and defending regular season champion St. Thomas and in a tie with St. Mary's University, which Carleton shared third with last season.</p> <p>Jaynes, the MIAC Coach of the Year in 2003, and the Knights will face the weight of expectations with an experienced stable of players, led by returning All-MIAC outside hitter Katie Freeman (Richfield, Minn.) and middle hitter Beth Freeman, a MIAC Playoff all-tournament team pick last year. Katie Freeman led the team with 2.72 kills per game, ranked second in digs at 4.55 per game and placed third in points scored with 313.0. Twin sister Beth came on strong late in the season and ended up leading the Knights in points scored with 350.5, including a school-record 1.36 blocks per game while finishing second in the conference in the category. Her 2.46 kills per game ranked third-best on the squad.</p> <p><u>Complete Carleton preview can be found through this link</u></p>
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Concordia College		
Head Coach:	Tim Mosser (12th season / 199-159 overall)	
2003 Record:	26-8 (8-3 MIAC / 2nd)	
Key Returners:	<p>Jacki Barten, Sr., H, 2003 AVCA All-American, three-time All-MIAC, 5th on school all-time block list.</p> <p>Amy Fitzner, Sr., H, 2003 AVCA All-Region, two-time All-MIAC, fifth in MIAC in kills in 2003.</p> <p>Rebecca Shane, So., H, 2003 AVCA All-Region, 2003 AVCA Region Freshman of the Year, 2003 MIAC Rookie of the Year.</p> <p>Jessica Walden, Sr., S, 2003 AVCA All-Region, two-time All-MIAC, school record holder in assists in a career.</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 6 + Libero /12</p>	

Season Preview:	<p>Since bowing out of the NCAA playoffs and capping a record-setting year in 2003, Tim Mosser and the Concordia volleyball team have been out shopping with their newly acquired R-E-S-P-E-C-T card. The Cobbers had four players earn all-region honors last fall and then had junior Jacki Barten placed on the All-American Third Team, becoming the first player in Concordia volleyball history to earn All-American honors.</p> <p>At the start of the 2004 season, the Cobbers used their R-E-S-P-E-C-T card to garner the top spot in the MIAC preseason coaches poll and a spot in the national preseason top 25 poll. Mosser, and his group of experienced veterans, know that in order to keep getting respect they have to win games and titles the old fashioned way - they'll have to earn it.</p> <p>The 2004 campaign could be the season that Mosser has waited for since four long years ago when he sported a team of all freshmen. The players that have stayed with the program have formed the backbone for the Cobbers drive towards last season's MIAC tournament championship and, hopefully, this year's goal of an unprecedented conference regular season crown. Concordia returns three seniors who were all-region last year and a fourth that was a defense stalwart as they look for the program's first MIAC regular season championship.</p> <p>Unfortunately for Mosser and the Cobbers, their new-found R-E-S-P-E-C-T card also bought one unwanted item. For 2004, Concordia has been tabbed as the "team to beat" by the other coaches in the conference. In their preseason poll, the league coaches voted Concordia as the preseason favorite to win the conference title. Not only did they vote the Cobbers number one, they did so by a large margin. Concordia garnered eight first-place votes and was voted no lower than third as they finished with 17 points. The next closest team was St. Thomas who finished with 32 points and only three first-place votes. Concordia will now have to get accustomed to wearing their newly purchased wardrobe of jerseys with big targets on the back.</p> <p>Individually, Concordia has four of the top players in the conference back for the upcoming season. Seniors Jacki Barten (Melrose, Minn./Melrose HS), Amy Fitzner (Valley City, N.D./Valley City HS) and Jessica Walden (were all members of the all-conference and all-region teams last fall, and Barten made the jump to the national level as she garnered All-American Third Team honors, and sophomore Rebecca Shane (Detroit Lakes, Minn./Detroit Lakes HS) who was voted the AVCA Region Freshman of the Year as well as the MIAC Rookie of the Year.</p> <p>Complete Cobber preview can be found at: www.cord.edu/dept/sports/vb04preview.html</p>
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Gustavus Adolphus College		
Head Coach:	Kari Eckheart (8th season/ 100-106 overall)	
2003 Record:	18-10 (6-5 MIAC / 7th-tie)	
Key Returners:	<p>Rachel Batalden – all-conference, 504 assists in MIAC play (1st in MIAC), 11.6 assists/game (24th in nation)</p> <p>Tara Houlihan – led team with 387 kills and 494 digs, 6.76 digs/game (1st in MIAC), 3.9 kills/game (6th in MIAC)</p> <p>Anne Osthus – 336 kills, 4.38 points/game (7th in MIAC), led team with 81 blocks</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 3 + Libero /9</p>	

Season Preview:	<p>After the second straight season of finishing just out of MIAC playoff contention, the Gustavus volleyball team returns in 2004 with its sights set on its first postseason appearance since 2000. Gustavus finished the 2003 season with a record of 18-10, posting a conference record of 6-5 for seventh place. With starters Jessica Schaetzke and Nicole Nesseth lost to graduation, Head Coach Kari Eckheart will build the 2004 Gusties around senior all-conference setter Rachel Batalden (Lamberton, Minn.), senior defensive specialists Jennifer Tischer (Lakeville, Minn.) and Sue Dailey (Owatonna, Minn.), junior rightside hitter Tara Houlihan (Sioux Falls, S.D.) and junior middle hitter Anne Osthus (Olivia, Minn.).</p> <p>Batalden and Houlihan had outstanding seasons last year and return to anchor the 2004 team. Batalden posted the most assists in MIAC play last season with 504 and was ranked 24th nationally with 1161 assists in 100 games. Houlihan led last year's team in kills with 387 and in digs with 494. She was also ranked first in the MIAC with 6.76 digs per game.</p> <p>In addition to Batalden and Houlihan, the Gusties return the trio of Tischer, Dailey, and Osthus, each of whom made significant contributions to last year's team. Tischer averaged 2.34 digs per game last season and established herself as one of the Gusties most effective servers. Dailey compiled 370 digs while playing in every game in 2003. Osthus led last year's team in blocks with 81 and recorded 336 kills. Sophomore middle hitter Becca Thompson (Mankato, Minn.), a transfer student from South Dakota State and first-year rightside hitter Jennifer Thelemann (LeSeuer, Minn.), a standout at LeSeuer-Henderson High School have looked good in preseason workouts and also appear capable of contributing right away.</p> <p>One area that Eckheart looks for her team to show improvement in this season is its ability to claim wins on the road. The Gusties posted a 5-1 record at home in 2003, but were only 1-4 on the road in conference matches. As a result of inconsistent play on the road, the team has fallen just short of the seven-win mark that virtually assures a spot in the postseason. Eckheart also thinks the increased difficulty of this year's schedule will make the team stronger when it comes to conference play. "I think we need to be challenged early on because you need to be ready to go once conference play starts," she comments. "It's going to be a competitive conference again this year, but our goal is to be a part of that top six."</p> <p>Gustavus opens its season on September 1 at UM-Morris before participating in the UW-River Falls Tournament September 3-4. Its first conference match is September 15 vs. Bethel.</p>
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Hamline University	
Head Coach:	Gina Rollie (2nd season / 12-15 overall)
2003 Record:	12-15 (2-9 MIAC / 10th)
Key Returners:	<p>Dana Luiken, So., MH, 6-0, Chatfield, Minn./Chosen Valley - Playing all 99 games, Luiken amassed 260 kills with 84 blocks and 28 service aces.</p> <p>Jenna Witt, So., DS, 5-6, Champlin, Minn./Champlin Park - Playing in 93 games, Witt led the Pipers with 420 digs in 2003.</p> <p>Joan Sheedy, Sr., RH, 5-9, Austin, Minn./Austin Pacelli - In 2003, Sheedy had 57 kills in 82 games for the Pipers.</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 2/6</p>

Season Preview:	<p>With one year under her belt, Hamline head volleyball coach Gina Rollie hopes to continue building a strong program and move up in the MIAC. The Pipers are looking at a young squad this year with only one senior and five sophomores returning to a team that went 12-15, 2-9 in the MIAC.</p> <p>"The biggest challenge for us will be playing consistently throughout the season and finishing strong," said Rollie. "Our biggest goal this year is to move up in the conference."</p> <p>Among the top returners are senior captain Joan Sheedy (Austin, Minn.) and sophomores Dana Luiken (Chatfield, Minn.) and Jenna Witt (Champlin, Minn.)</p> <p>Sheedy is the only senior and will be looked to for her experience and leadership as the captain. She enters her fourth season with the Pipers with a strong right side attack.</p> <p>Luiken is a strong middle hitter who played in every game last season. She helped lead the offense in 2003 with 260 kills and 84 blocks. She also added 28 serving aces and 72 digs for the Pipers. Luiken will lead the offensive attack this year as well as putting up a solid block.</p> <p>Witt will come back as the libero to lead the defense. In 2003, Witt compiled 420 digs and finished with a 4.52 digs per game average. As the only returning defensive player, she will be a steady force in the back row.</p> <p>Also returning for the Pipers are sophomores Heather Rich (Menomonie, Wis.), Christina Rossetter (Knife River, Minn.), and Kristin Isle (Annandale, Minn.). These three have strong junior varsity experience from the 2003 season and will compete for spots in the front row.</p> <p>The Pipers hope the new recruits can step up and fill some key positions. Rollie looks to first-year setter Angie Asmus (Wayzata, Minn.) to take over the spot vacated by career assist lead Emily Peterson, who graduated in 2004. The team is also looking to incoming first-years Andrea Hannem (Bloomington, Minn.) and Shelby Hyllengren (Cannon Falls, Minn.) to contribute as outside hitters.</p> <p>The Pipers are hoping to add age and experience to the team with two strong transfers. Laurisa Ewert comes from Div. I Rhode Island, where she played basketball. Ewert is a middle hitter and a strong athlete. "She could fill a big hole for us," said Rollie, "because we lack depth in that position."</p>
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Macalester College		
Head Coach:	Steph Schleuder (7th year at MAC / 97-75 overall at MAC) (29th season overall / 658-360)	
2003 Record:	19-10 (6-5 MIAC / 7th-tie)	
Key Returners:	<p>May Lin Kessenich (Sr., Libero, Milford, Conn. / Foran) – Two-time MIAC defensive player of the year, 5.6 digs/gm</p> <p>Lauren Eberhart (So., OH, Madelia, Minn.) – 2.85 kills/game, .238 hitting pct.</p> <p>Bethany Tate (Sr., OH, Charlotte, N.C. / Myers Park) – 2.83 kills/game</p> <p>Maggie Buttermore (Jr., MH, Lincoln, Neb. / East)– 2.34 kills/game, 3.05 digs/game, 0.75 blocks/game, 0.4 aces/game</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 3 + Libero /NA</p>	

Season Preview:	<p>Macalester took on a most difficult schedule a year ago and finished at 19-10, with over half of the team's losses coming at the hands of teams ranked in the top 25 nationally in the final NCAA Division III poll. Mac won tournaments hosted by Augsburg and Pomona-Pitzer. Some tough MIAC setbacks, however, kept the team from getting into the post-season league playoffs, something Macalester is eager to achieve this fall. Another good season is anticipated this year but first Mac must replace a pair of four-year starters in middle hitter Carley Bomstad and setter Sarah Graves. One of the program's top players ever, Bomstad was a four-time All-MIAC pick and last year received honorable mention All-America honors.</p> <p>Coach Schleuder is optimistic for a winning season and has plenty of key players returning, led by two-time MIAC Defensive Player of the Year May Lin Kessenich (Sr., Milford, Conn. / Foran), who provided 5.6 digs per game as the team's libero. Kessenich led the conference in digs as a sophomore and ranked third last year.</p> <p>"I'm very optimistic about the 2004 season," reports Schleuder. "We will have some very talented young players, coupled with strong returning players. Carley leaves some big shoes to fill and Sarah Graves gave us a lot of leadership, but we will have lots of competition for starting positions."</p> <p>Several reliable and improving front row players return with good hitting and blocking potential, including Lauren Eberhart (So., Madelia, Minn.), Bethany Tate (Sr., Charlotte, N.C. / Myers Park) and Maggie Buttermore (Jr., Lincoln, Neb. / East). Eberhart and Tate averaged 2.8 kills per game while Buttermore added 2.3 while ranking second to Bomstad with 0.75 blocks per game. Eberhart and Buttermore were last year's team leaders in serving aces.</p>
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College of Saint Benedict Head Coach: Michelle Swanson-Blaeser (5th season / 55-62 overall) 2003 Record: 14-16 (7-4 MIAC / 3rd-tie)	
Key Returners:	<p>Claire Loesch (Sr., MB, 5'9", All-MIAC)</p> <p>Laura Zwach (Soph., Libero, 5'3")</p> <p>Shantelle Needham (Jr., MB, 5'9")</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 4 + Libero /10</p>
Season Preview:	<p>Coming off a season in which the College of Saint Benedict women's volleyball team appeared in their fourth consecutive MIAC tournament, Michelle Swanson Blaeser is even more optimistic about what lies ahead in the 2004 season. Armed with a core of standout returnees, a handful of transfers, and a group of impressive first-year athletes, the Blazers are anticipating a strong season.</p> <p>The Blazers have nine returnees, four starters and one libero, back from last season's team who went 14-16 overall and 7-4 in MIAC play. The veterans are joined by three transfers and six first-year athletes.</p> <p>Leading the attack will be the captain Claire Loesch, as she wraps her noteworthy collegiate career at Saint Benedict. Juniors Shantelle Needham, Beth Schiller, and Ashley Pinckney bring two years of valuable experience to the team.</p> <p>Five sophomores return to the Blazers, on the defensive attack is Laura Zwach who had a record year from the libero position in the 2003 season. She recorded the most digs of any first-year athlete in the MIAC, with a total of 509. The defensive specialist tallied three games of 30+ digs for the Blazers and will return to the back row and anchor a tight defense. Clarey McKeown, Jessica Nokleby, Monica Eiden and Alicia Reif also provide much needed depth on the court.</p> <p>The roster will be strengthened by three sophomore transfers who will give the Blazers considerable strength. The newcomers bring impressive credentials to the team and have able capabilities to break into the starting line-up. Setter Kelly Lindskog joins the Blazers from MT Royal in Calgary, Canada, Teresa Knapper comes from St. Cloud State, and Jessica Jensen towers over the net at 6-2 from the University of New Mexico.</p> <p>Six first-year athletes will join the Blazers attack. 5-7 defensive specialist Tessie Reinsch, outside hitters Emily Stessmen and Kate Waage, along with middle blockers Theresa Naumann, Jenna Haler and Meghan Conway will look to break into the line-up.</p>

College of St. Catherine Head Coach: Nicole Hess (2nd season / 3-22 overall) 2003 Record: 3-22 (0-11 MIAC / 12th)	
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Key Returners:	<p>Amy Pommerening, JR, Menasha, WI- Outside Hitter</p> <p>Bridget Holman, SO, Springfield, MN- Setter/DS</p> <p>Charlotte Nagel, SO, Big Lake, MN- Middle Hitter</p> <p>Nicole Haase, SO, Bertha, MN- Middle Hitter</p> <p>Lindsey Wolf, SO, Gig Harbor, WA, Opposite</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 3/5</p>
Season Preview:	<p>Even though the Wildcat volleyball team was held winless in conference play last season, the team really started to improve and compete by the end of the year under first year coach Nicole Hess. The Wildcats return five players from that squad and add seven new players this season; Trisha Johnson (SO, Cmaplin, MN), Tabitha Mellgren (JR, Cambridge, MN), Kristine Browder (FY, Minneapolis, MN), Rebecca Theis (FY, Minneapolis, MN), Shantel Steen (FY, Spearfish, SD), Emily Van Hon (FY, Fairfax, MN) and Sarah Dombrowsky (FY, Park Rapids, MN). Head coach Nicole Hess, entering her second season, looks to pick up where they left off. "We had some great matches last season and this year we'll be looking to take some big strides against the tough conference competition." In addition to the eleven conference matches, the Wildcats will be traveling to four tournaments throughout the season.</p> <p>The Wildcats open their season at home against non-conference opponent Martin Luther on September 1st. The 2004 MIAC season gets underway on September 15th at home against Saint Mary's University.</p>

Saint Mary's University		
Head Coach:	Mike Lester (7th season / 118-78 overall)	
2003 Record:	21-11 overall (7-4 MIAC / 3rd-tie)	
Key Returners:	<p>Tessa Stranik (Sr., Setter, Eatonville, Wash. / 1st-team All-MIAC, set single-season assist record with 1,433, ranked 7th in NCAA Division III in assists).</p> <p>Tracy Koertgen (Sr., Rightside, Crystal Lake, Ill. / 1st-team All-MIAC, 392 kills, 3.7 kpg, 71 aces, 226 digs, 75 blocks)</p> <p>Kirstan Rouzer (Sr., Outside hitter, Comstock, Wis. / 350 kills, 3.8 kpg, 36 aces, 367 digs, 40 blocks)</p> <p>Ashley Dingels (Sr., Outside hitter, Gibbon, Minn. / 121 kills in 36 games, before season-ending knee injury, 28 digs, 32 blocks)</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 6 + Libero /12</p>	
Season Preview:	<p>For the second time in his tenure as a member of the Saint Mary's University volleyball team, coach Mike Lester has his entire starting lineup returning as his Cardinals gear up for their season opener on Wednesday, Sept. 1 against Luther. And if the first time is any indication, Lester and the Cardinals should not make any plans to be visiting family and friends over the Thanksgiving weekend in late November. "When you compare this year's team with our last national tournament team, there are a lot of similarities," said Lester, who coached the senior-dominated Cardinals to their last appearance in the NCAA Division III national tournament during that 2000 season. For Lester, the 2004 edition is virtually a mirror image of that 2000 team. "When you look at both teams, the greatest similarity is the fact that both are led by a big group of seniors," said Lester, whose 2000 team featured eight seniors, while this year's team has six. "Anytime you have that much experience returning, it's a big plus." When the 2000 season ended and the 2001 campaign began, the torch was passed to newcomers Ashley Dingels (Gibbon, Minn.), Kirstan Rouzer (Comstock, Wis.), Tessa Stranik (Eatonville, Wash.), Tracy Koertgen (Crystal Lake, Ill.), Katie Christensen (Crystal Lake, Ill.) and Mollie Melton (Pine Island, Minn.). And they didn't disappoint. As freshmen, they got their first taste of collegiate volleyball and finished with a respectable 16-14 overall record. A year later, it was 15-14, followed by a 21-11 effort a year ago. "Obviously, one of our biggest strength this year is experience," said Lester. "We've got a number of people who have been major contributors for the past three seasons -- and they have gotten better and better each year." Which, of course, begs the question - will this year be their best yet? "The potential (to equal - or better - the performance of the 2000 team) is there, and that's exciting," said Lester, whose team has qualified for each of the last two MIAC post-season tournaments. "But it's also going to be a huge challenge. If we are going to achieve our goals, we are going to have to play consistent volleyball - at a very high level - night-in and night-out. And that's something we haven't been able to do in the past."</p> <p>Complete SMU volleyball preview can be found at: http://sports.smumn.edu/volleyball/2004/newsletter/vbpreview.html</p>	

St. Olaf College		
Head Coach:	Traci Cook (3rd season / 34-32 overall) Cindy Book (23rd season / 549-248 overall)	
2003 Record:	14-17 (5-6 MIAC / 9th)	
Key Returners:	Audrey Volstad (So., Hanley Falls, Minn./Yellow Medicine East) Danica Finseth (Jr., Chatfield, Minn./Chosen Valley) Jillian Dalen (Sr., Wabasha, Minn.) Ashley Dennis (So., Billings, Minn./Skyview) Andrea Otteman (So., Ames, Iowa) Janelle Stewart (Sr., Pelican Rapids, Minn.) Mara Pederson (Sr., Sioux Falls, S.D./Lincoln) Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 5/NA	
Season Preview:	<p>In 2004, St. Olaf coach Traci Cook is in good company once again.</p> <p>Cook, entering her third season on the Ole bench, has long time head coach Cindy Book on staff, this year as co coach.</p> <p>"I model myself after her," said Cook, who was an All American at St. Olaf while playing for Book. "Her record doesnt lie, she's just a great coach."</p> <p>Book collected a 549-248 record in her 22 years as a head coach. She spent three years at Keene St, eight at Bethel and then 11 at St. Olaf, surpassing 500 career wins in 2000 on the Ole bench. She led St. Olaf to a third place finish in the 1997 NCAA Tournament - a team that starred Cook.</p> <p>In 2002 Book, then the Athletic Director, took a one-year break from Volleyball. She joined again last year as Cooks assistant before becoming a co coach this year.</p> <p>Cook, too, has had success as a coach. In her first two seasons, she has a 34-32 record and her second place 2002 team won the MIAC Tournament and went to the second round of the NCAA regional.</p> <p>"We have a blast," said Book. "Traci and I compliment each other so well."</p> <p>Though their experiences and coaching styles differ, both agree that the Oles are primed for a very competitive year.</p> <p>"As far as work ethic and commitment, this is probably the best we have had since Traci's group," said Book. "I know it sounds corny, but team chemistry is going to help us win games this year."</p> <p>St. Olaf will build around setter Audrey Volstad (So., Hanley Falls, Minn./Yellow Medicine East) and All-MIAC middle Danica Finseth (Jr., Chatfield, Minn./Chosen Valley). Jillian Dalen (Sr., Wabasha, Minn.) and Ashley Dennis (So., Billings, Minn./Skyview) also return for the Oles as do seniors Janell Stewart (Pelican Rapids, Minn.) and Mara Pederson (Sr., Sioux Falls, S.D./Lincoln).</p> <p>Outside hitter Andrea Otteman (So., Ames, Iowa) will play a more pivotal role this year.</p> <p>A number of talented first years could contribute as well.</p> <p>"We are going to have to solidify a lineup, and that will take time, said Cook. "There are going to be a lot of opportunities, and our first years will have a chance to step in."</p> <p>St. Olaf opens at the River Falls Invitational Sept. 3-4. The Oles open MIAC play at Macalester on Sept. 15, and play their first home game on Sept. 22 against Gustavus.</p>	

University of St. Thomas		
Head Coach:	Thanh Pham (2nd season / 24-6 overall at UST)	
2003 Record:	24-6 (10-1 MIAC / 1st)	

Key Returners:	<p>Amie Lee Aschenbeck (Sr., OH, 6-0, AVCA All-America 2nd Team)</p> <p>Rachelle Dosch (So., OH, 5-7)</p> <p>Erika Wetze (Jr., OH, 5-7)</p> <p>Lisa Yonke (Jr., L, 6-0)</p> <p>Returning Starters/Letterwinners: 3 + Libero /6</p>
Season Preview:	<p>The St. Thomas volleyball team is ranked 16th in the Division III preseason top-25 poll released Aug. 25 by the American Volleyball Coaches' Association (AVCA). Concordia-Moorhead is the only other MIAC team in the poll at No. 24. UST was picked to finish second in behind Concordia in the 2004 MIAC volleyball race in a preseason vote of conference head coaches. The Cobbers, who return all six starters from an NCAA playoff team of 2003, received eight of the 12 first-place votes and was tabbed to win the MIAC. The Tommies received three first-place votes and finished ahead of Carleton and St. Mary's for the second spot.</p> <p>Coach Thanh Pham's Tommies graduated two-time All-American setter Jane Gibbs and seven other seniors who were a part of two MIAC championships in the last four seasons. The 2003 Toms won the conference at 10-1 and finished 24-6, but missed the NCAA playoffs despite beating six teams that made the 48-team national field. They were ranked as high as No. 9 in the Division III poll and were ranked No. 17 in the final poll.</p> <p>The Tommies return three starters -- senior All-American middle blocker Amie Lee Aschenbeck, junior hitter Erika Wetzal, and sophomore hitter Rachelle Dosch. The athletic Dosch was an all-conference hurdler in track and field as a freshman for the Tommies' MIAC champion squad. Also back from the varsity are senior hitter Callie Peotter and junior hitter Ann Eibensteiner.</p> <p>Freshmen expected to contribute this season include 5-7 setter Maria Spencer (Perham HS), 5-3 Libero Aly McConnell (Chaska HS) and two players likely to join for the Tommies' NCAA champion softball team -- 6-1 middle blocker Kristin Storrs (Centennial HS) and 5-9 hitter Kelly Fitzpatrick (St. Agnes HS). Fitzpatrick's twin sisters, seniors Kathleen and Colleen, also play softball for St. Thomas.</p> <p>Thanh, who's starting his second season as the Tommies' head coach, had added Dennis Amundson as an assistant coach. Amundson was a volunteer coach the last eight seasons under 2003 National Coach of the Year Mike Hebert at the University of Minnesota. The Gophers reached the Division I Final Four last season.</p> <p>The Tommies will play another challenging schedule, with nine matches scheduled against teams ranked in the Division III preseason top 25, including No. 1-ranked Washington (Mo.), No. 5 Ohio Northern and No. 10 UW-LaCrosse. They start their season Sept. 1 with two matches at Hamline -- 3:30 p.m. vs. UW-Superior, and 5:30 p.m. vs. Viterbo.</p>

2003 - [Standings](#), [Results](#), [Awards](#), [Final Stats](#), [Season Preview](#), [Preseason Poll](#)

2002 - [Standings](#), [Results](#), [Awards](#), [Final Stats](#), [Players of the Week](#), [Season Preview](#)

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