

2010-11 MIAC Women's Basketball Season Preview

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ST. PAUL, Minn. – The 2010 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) women's basketball season tips off with plenty of strength at the top and the entire league gunning for a spot in the six-team playoffs. And – as the MIAC learned a year ago – once a team gets in the playoffs, anything is possible.

However, before the Cinderella stories start to spin, the gaze of the conference heading into the 2010-11 season is focused on its five-time defending champion, the College of Saint Benedict. The Blazers were brilliant a year ago, going 21-6 overall and 18-4 in the conference to share the regular-season title, and all but one starter return for **Mike Durbin**, the dean of the MIAC coaches in his 25th season at CSB.

It's that combination of past success and returning potential that have the Blazers pegged as the team to beat in the 2010-11 MIAC Women's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll. Saint Benedict received eight of 11 first-place votes (coaches couldn't vote for their own team) and a total of 117 points to keep the same target on its back that's been there for half a decade.

However, the Blazers weren't a landslide favorite and here's where last year's Cinderella enters the frame. A year ago the University of St. Thomas became the first No. 5 seed to win three road games in six days to claim the MIAC Playoff Championship and the conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Division III Playoffs.

The Tommies – who were 21-8 overall and 15-7 in the MIAC – return eight of their top 11 from that team and have high expectations as they enter their first season in their shiny new arena. That led UST to receive the other four first-place votes and finish second in the poll, right on CSB's heels as the No. 1 contender with 113 points.

St. Thomas isn't the only threat to Saint Benedict's run at the top. The MIAC coaches predict Concordia College and Gustavus Adolphus College will be in the running for the conference crown as well. The senior-laden Cobbers finished third in the poll with 99.5 points, and they return their top three scorers from last year's 18-8 team that finished in third place at 17-5 in the MIAC. And Gustavus, which tied Saint Benedict for the regular-season championship a year ago at 18-4 (20-6 overall), loses three key players but returns its top two scorers and five experienced veterans from last year's title team. The Gusties were a close fourth in the poll at 94.5 points.

The battle for a spot in the MIAC playoffs should be equally intense, as the next four teams in the poll all finished within six points of one another. Bethel University was fifth with 64 points, Saint Catherine University was a point behind the Royals in sixth with 63. St. Olaf was just another two behind in seventh with 61 points, and Hamline University's 58 points put it in eighth place. To add to the magic of last year's playoffs, St. Catherine became the MIAC's first No. 6 seed to pull off a first-round road upset and advance to the semifinals, where the Wildcats took Saint Benedict to overtime.

The poll rounded out with Saint Mary's University in ninth with 47 points, last year's No. 5 seed in the playoffs Macalester College was 10th with 34 points. Carleton College came in 11th with 27 points and Augsburg College finished out the poll with 14 points in 12th place.

While all 12 teams open the season with high hopes, the road to the title still runs through St. Joseph, as the No. 18 Blazers open conference play as the only MIAC team ranked in the Top 25. Saint Benedict's deep, experienced squad will be led by a pair of returning All-MIAC seniors: post **Heather Gillund** and wing **Amy Stifter**. Add in All-MIAC Honorable Mention senior forward **Laura Canton** and senior point guard **Devin Bowlin** and the foundation for continued success is in place for Durbin's squad.

St. Thomas also has plenty back from its trip to the NCAA Tournament a year ago. The Tommies' talent starts with 6-foot-2 star center **Rachel Booth** (17.1 ppg, 9.2 rpg), who was First Team All-MIAC and All-Region a year ago and is a game-changer on both ends of the floor. She's joined by All-MIAC guards **Ali Johnson** and **Becky Thiesen**, several other experienced returners and a solid incoming class.

The Cobbers also plan to contend for the title behind their talented senior trio of **Erica Nord**, **Lindsey Schultz** and **Maggie Bauernfeind**. Nord and Schultz were All-MIAC First Team selections and Bauernfeind earned Honorable Mention honors. Gustavus also brings back a pair of Mollys that hope to help the Gusties defend their MIAC Co-Championship. **Molly Geske** and **Molly Mathiowetz** both earned All-MIAC accolades a season ago as both averaged more than 12 points per game and led Gustavus to a 20-win season.

Bethel was a freshman-dominated team a season ago, and the Royals hope their squad can take a big step forward with a lot of experience back in 2010-11. Guards **Taylor Sheley** and **Shana Grejtak** will provide the leadership for Bethel's team on the rise. St. Catherine hopes to build off its playoff success behind two-time All-MIAC forward **Laura Kalbfell**, who led the MIAC in scoring (17.6 ppg) and was in the top five in rebounding (7.0 rpg).

St. Olaf is another team that leaned heavily on freshmen a year ago, and its top four returning scorers are all sophomores this season. **Katie Lauer** is back after averaging 12.5 ppg and earning MIAC All-Rookie Team honors to lead the Oles' youth movement.



Conversely, Hamline will be a senior-led squad in 2010-11 under first-year coach Kerri Stockwell. Three-time All-MIAC selection and Jostens Trophy finalist **Mary Wilkowski** (16.9 ppg, 8.9 rpg) leads the Pipers experienced team in her final collegiate season.

Returning strength seems to be a theme in the MIAC this season, and that holds true for Saint Mary's, which returns its three leading scorers from a year ago. All-MIAC First Team pick **Jess Miller** and MIAC All-Rookie Team selection **Jessica Thone** are both back to lead the Cardinals this season. Macalester seems to be one of the teams that doesn't fit the mold, with four starters graduated from last year's MIAC Playoff team. Forwards **Majra Mucic** and **Holly Schiedermayer** will give the Scots a strong frontcourt, and will lead the rebuilding efforts.

Carleton women's basketball enters a new era as former Knights' star **Cassie (Glasrud) Kosiba** takes over as head coach after the retirement of longtime coach **Tammy Metcalf-Filzen**. All-MIAC selection **Ally Weaver** leads Carleton's young squad that features 10 freshmen or sophomores. Augsburg lost its leading scorer from a year ago, but guards **Serenae Levine**, **Lexi Thompson** and **Tracee Schrank** headline a strong group of returners for an Auggie team that hopes to be on the rise.

The 2010-11 regular season is already under way, and MIAC play opened Tuesday with Concordia defeating St. Olaf in Northfield, Minn., to kick off the conference season. The rest of the MIAC teams open conference play Wednesday night, and the drama should be rich from now until late February.

The six-team MIAC playoffs will be held Feb. 22, 24 and 26, with the winner receiving the conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Division III Women's Basketball Playoffs.

The 2010-11 MIAC Women's Basketball Preview continues below, with complete results from the 2010-11 MIAC Women's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll as well as complete team previews for each of the conference's 12 teams.

2010-11 MIAC Women's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (11 for first, 10 for second, etc.) Teams are ranked in order of highest point total to lowest with vote totals listed and first-place votes shown in parentheses.

2010-11 MIAC Women's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll		
Rank	Institution	Total
1	Saint Benedict (8)	117
2	St. Thomas (4)	113
3	Concordia	99.5
4	Gustavus	94.5
5	Bethel	64
6	St. Catherine	63
7	St. Olaf	61
8	Hamline	58
9	Saint Mary's	47
10	Macalester	34
11	Carleton	27
12	Augsburg	14

2010-11 MIAC Women's Basketball Playoff Dates

Quarterfinals (Tuesday, Feb.), Semifinals (Thursday, Feb. 24), Finals (Saturday, Feb. 26)

| [2010-11 MIAC Schedule](#) | [2009-10 MIAC Statistics](#) | [MIAC Recordbook](#) | [MIAC Archives](#) |



Coach: Jennifer Britz
Career Record: 28-110 (6 seasons)
2009-10 Finish: Tied 11th (4-18 MIAC, 4-21 overall)

Augsburg Season Preview

The Augsburg College women's basketball team is returning four starters, nine letterwinners and five of their top six scorers from a year ago. Building on last year's experience, the Auggies are aiming to break into the top half of the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference standings in 2010-11.

Last season, the Auggies increased their scoring average by 8.3 points per-game and jumped from ninth in the conference in steals to second, averaging 11.16 steals per-game.

Although Augsburg lost leading scorer and All-MIAC Honorable-Mention honoree Shannon Renne (Nicollet, Minn.) to graduation, the Auggies return a trio of experienced guards in Serenae Levine (JR, Eden Prairie, Minn.), Lexi Thompson (JR, St. Michael, Minn./St. Michael-Albertville HS) and tracee Schrank (SO, Reedsburg, Wis.), all of whom played more than 25 minutes per-game for the Auggies last season.

Levine averaged 10.2 points and 5.2 rebounds per-game last season as she captained the Augsburg offense from the point guard position. Thompson, with her defensive mindset and consistent work ethic, registered 5.7 points, 4.7 rebounds and 2.0 steals per-game last year and will be looked to for her leadership on the court this season. In her Auggie debut season, Schrank proved herself to be one of the most well-rounded first-year players in the MIAC, posting 9.7 points, 3.9 rebounds and 1.7 assists per-game.

Brittany Dyshaw (SO, Eagan, Minn.) returns to the forward position for the Auggies after an exciting rookie season that culminated with All-MIAC First-Year Team honors. Dyshaw averaged 10.2 points and 7.0 rebounds per-game, leading the conference in steals (3.2) and ranking sixth in rebounding.

Look for newcomers Nikki Borkhuis (JR, Watertown, S.D.) and Maddie Wieske (FY, De Pere, Wis.) to make an impact for the Auggies at the forward position and Jordan Feis (FY, Truman, Minn.) to factor in to the equation at guard.



Bethel

Coach: Jon Herbrechtsmeyer

Career Record: 88-114(8 seasons at Bethel)

2009-10 Finish: 8th (10-12 MIAC, 11-14 overall)

Bethel Season Preview

The 2010-11 Bethel Royals are looking to take another step forward this year in the MIAC. Coming off a year in which 9 of the 15 roster spots were filled by freshman, the Royals a year older and wiser, will be looking to that experience as a key to their future.

Guard Taylor Sheley (Jr., Backus, Minn.) scored 294 points last year, pulled down 62 rebounds, and had 36 steals. Senior guard Shana Grejtak (Sr., Franklin, Minn.) is another returner that played a key role in the 2009-10 season. She shot 47 % from the floor last season, and grabbed 189 rebounds for an average of 7.6 per game. Scottie Moats (So., Waconia, Minn.) was second for the Royals a year ago in both points scored and rebounds, putting up an average of 9.9 ppg, and 6.7 rpg. Krisiti Nye (Sr., Nashville, Tenn.) will also be a large part of the offense after putting up 8.4 ppg a year ago.

Newcomers to the Royals will include freshman Michaela Petrich (Fr., Rosemount, Minn.), Nicole Berscheid (Fr., Holdingford, Minn.), and Katelyn Thomsen (Askvo, Minn.). Petrich comes to the Royals after being a key player for Rosemount. Berscheid was a stand out athlete while competing for Holdingford high school, and Thomsen comes to the Royals after being selected as part of the 2010 Minnesota Senior Girls' All Star Team.

With this solid crew the Royals look to come together as a team and improve on their finish a year ago in the MIAC.



Carleton

Coach: Cassie Kosiba

Career Record: 0-0 (1st season at Carleton)

2009-10 Finish: Tied 9th (5-17 MIAC, 5-20 overall)

Carleton Season Preview

Concordia Season Preview

Like the Concordia men's and women's soccer teams and the men's basketball squad, the Cobber women's basketball team will be senior dominated and have high expectations entering the season. The 2010-11 team returns their top three scorers from last year's 18-8 squad and has five seniors on the roster who will be looking to steer the squad towards their second NCAA Tournament appearance in the past three seasons.

Not only does Concordia have a deep senior class but they also have a strong supporting cast who will give the Cobbers a chance to make a run at their first MIAC championship in over 20 years.

The foundation for this year's team will be formed by the senior trio of Erica Nord (Wolverton, Minn./Barnesville HS), Lindsey Schultz (Hitterdal, Minn./Ulen-Hitterdal HS) and Maggie Bauernfeind (Rosemount, Minn.). The three were the top scorers from last season and all three earned MIAC All-Conference honors last year. Nord was the team's leading scorer, averaging 13.9 points per game. She also led the team in assists, steals and 3-point field percentage and was second on the team in rebounding. She finished the year by averaging 5.0 rebounds, 4.15 assists and 2.54 steals in the team's 26 overall games. Nord scored in double figures in all but six games last year. She had at least 20 points in four games and had a season-high 25 points against Augsburg on Feb. 3. Nord was named to the D3hoops.com All-Region Team and toured Brazil this summer with a group of DIII All-Stars.

Bauernfeind finished second on the team in scoring in 2009-10 and was named to the All-Conference First Team. She averaged 10.8 points and led the team in free throw percentage with an 86.1% mark. Bauernfeind started all 26 games last year and scored at least 10 points in 16 games. Schultz earned All-Conference Honorable Mention honors while leading the team in rebounding. She averaged 5.2 rebounds per game and had at least five rebounds in 15 games. Schultz was also third on the team in scoring with a 9.6 points per game average. She was in the top 20 of the conference in four different statistical categories. She was 18th in rebounding (5.0), sixth in field goal percentage (50.3%), 13th in assists (2.68) and 10th in assists-to-turnover ratio (1.34).

Despite the loss of Sara Sorbo and Anna Matetich, two of the team's starting five from last year, head coach Jessica Rahman is excited about the depth of this year's squad and the different looks the team can give opponents. The Cobbers have several returning players who will have shown great strides in development with a year of experience under their belt. Senior Ali Demmer (Albert Lea, Minn.) has stepped up her play and will be the team's starting post player in 2010-11. She has steadily improved and is ready to make an impact. Last year she played in 24 games, averaged 10.2 minutes per game and had a good run at the start of the year. Demmer had at least three rebounds in six of the first 12 games and scored at least two points in all but one game during that stretch. She will be looking to duplicate her early season success in 2009-10 and carry it throughout the entire season in 2010-11.

Another senior who will play an important role in this year's road to the postseason will be Brittany Jossart (Bismarck, N.D./Bismarck Century HS). Jossart was sixth on the team last season with a 6.0 points per game average. She was third on the team in field goal percentage (44.6%) and has shown the ability to be a quality shooter from the outside. She will get more opportunities to score this season as she will step into one of the two starting guard roles vacated by Sorbo and Matetich.

A pair of returning players and a freshman will also factor into the equation for Concordia in 2010-11. Sophomores Tricia Sorensen (Bismarck, N.D./Bismarck Century HS) and Emily Thesing (Brainerd, Minn.) showed flashes of brilliance last season and both will be helped by a year of experience at the college level. Sorensen played in 24 games last year and averaged 4.8 points and 3.0 rebounds per game. The 5-11 wing player has shown the ability to beat opposing defense from the outside. Against Augsburg she connected on four 3-point shots and had a season-high 22 points. Thesing is another player who has shown the ability to carry the team with her outside shooting touch. She played in only 13 games last year but has a soft shooting touch from outside the arc.

For the first time in a few year, Rahman will have a legitimate inside presence. First-year player Alexandra Lippert (Willmar, Minn.) has the size to alter shots on defense and get points from under the basket. Lippert, and All-State Honorable Mention performer at Willmar High School last season, is listed at 6-4 and is the tallest player for the Cobbers since 1989.

The 2010-11 Concordia women's basketball team has plenty of motivation to start the season. The Cobbers dropped four of their final nine games in 2009-10, including an MIAC Quarterfinal game at home against St. Kate's. Rahman's squad will be looking to erase the late-season memory by using their senior leadership, up-tempo offense and pressure defense to make a run at the top of the conference standings. If the talented underclassmen can step up and give the team depth along the way, then the Cobbers might be looking at a deep run in the postseason.



Gustavus

Coach: Mickey Haller

Career Record: 189-77 (10 seasons at Gustavus)

2009-10 Finish: Tied 1st (18-4 MIAC, 20-6 overall)

Gustavus Season Preview

On the perimeter, Gustavus returns Ava Perry (Wabasha, Minn.), Colleen Ruane (Edina, Minn.), Steph Comer (Minnetonka, Minn.), and Liz Shay (Minneapolis, Minn.). Perry averaged 6.1 points per game last season, while shooting 37 percent from the field and 33 percent from three- point range. Ruane and Comer will add depth at the point, sharing much of the ball-handling responsibilities. Ruane finished third on the team in assists, while both Comer and Shay saw limited minutes a year ago.

Joining Mathiowetz in the front-court are sophomores Abby Rothenbuehler (Mankato, Minn.), Kelsey Florian (Roseville, Minn.), and newcomer Eli Benz (Steele, N.D.). Rothenbuehler, a member of the 2010 MIAC All-Rookie Team, averaged 4.2 points and 4.6 rebounds per game, while recording a team-high 19 blocks. Florian is off to a fast start this season averaging 8.7 points per game and shooting 63 percent from the field. Benz, a versatile swing player, has come off the bench to play just over 18 minutes per game so far. She is averaging 6.7 points per game and will play both in the post and on the perimeter.



Coach: Kerri Stockwell
Career Record: 0-0 (1st season at Hamline)
2009-10 Finish: Tied 6th (10-12 MIAC, 12-13 overall)

Hamline Season Preview

In her inaugural season at the helm of the Piper women's basketball program, Kerri Stockwell returns a 2010 Jostens Award finalist as part of a talented senior class looking to lead Hamline back into MIAC tournament contention.

The lone graduate from the 2009-10 Piper campaign was Rochelle Sather, but seniors Mary Wilkowski (Savannah, Ga.), Jackie Kelly (Blaine, Minn.), Nikki Klinck (Hibbing, Minn.), and Carolyn Jorgensen (Franklin, Wis.) return for their fourth year on the Hamline hardwood.

Wilkowski ended her junior season on the Jostens Trophy finalist list, a national award created by the Rotary Club of Salem, Virginia, to honor the most outstanding men's and women's Division III basketball players of the year. She was the lone MIAC athlete on either list. Wilkowski was also named All-MIAC for the third year in the row en route to earning third team All-West Region honors from D3hoops.com.

She shot 50 percent from the field, averaged 16.9 points per game and pulled down 8.9 rebounds per game last season. On January 30, she reached the 1,000-career point milestone, becoming just the ninth woman at Hamline to do so.

Klinck, a quick and aggressive player, returns at the point guard position after dishing out 105 assists last season and snagging 49 steals. She was third on the team in scoring with 9.5 ppg. Klinck and Kelly were both named honorable mention All-Conference. Kelly's 11.2 ppg was second on the team while she tallied 75 assists and 26 steals last season.

Kelly is a sharp shooter from the outside who broke the school record for 3-point shooting percentage in a season in both of the last two years (.422 in 2008-09, .430 in 2009-10).

Splitting time with Klinck in running the point last year was Kara Poirier (So., Eau Claire, Wis.), who returns after a strong debut season in which she had 53 assists and averaged 6.2 ppg. She also had 25 steals last season.

Jorgensen and Stephanie Robinson (Jr., Sioux City, Iowa) are back to play for the Pipers after injuries shortened their seasons last year.

Stockwell and her coaching staff bring in a strong set of new players looking to add depth to the roster led by these returners. Heading up the lists is Veronika Jakubovic (Fy., Maple Grove, Minn.), who will provide an addition presence on the inside to compliment Wilkowski.

Brianna Blackhawk (Jr., Brooklyn Park, Minn.) comes in to the roster as a transfer player from MCTC and should bring her proven scoring abilities to the court right away.

First-years Lauren Turitto (West St. Paul, Minn.), Laura Kruse (Salt Lake City, Utah), Je'Naya Brown (Lewisville, Texas), and Jasmine Clemon (Chicago, Ill.) round out the incoming class of newcomers. Turitto will be a physical addition to the Piper post play, Kruse adds versatility around the perimeter, while Brown and Clemons bring depth and speed to the point guard and guard positions, respectively.

With a strong corps of returning players and exciting depth being added to the Piper roster, Stockwell will aim to return the Pipers to the MIAC playoffs after being edged out in a tie-breaker last year. A return to the post-season would give her senior class three trips to the MIAC tournament in their career.



Macalester

Coach: Ellen Thompson

Career Record: 46-79 (5 seasons)

2009-10 Finish: 4th (16-6 MIAC, 16-10 overall)

Macalester Season Preview

Macalester graduated four starters from last winter's fourth-place MIAC team, and will look for several veterans and newcomers to pick up the slack. The Scots have improved upon their record five consecutive seasons under head coach Ellen Thompson (going 16-6 in the conference last year), but that streak may be difficult to maintain with such a new team as Macalester loses its No. 4 all-time scorer (center Ann Baltzer – 1,278 career points) and No. 5 all-time scorer (forward Trina PaStarr - 1,265 points).

Two key reserves from last year will be asked to step into these positions: forwards Majra Mucic (Sr., Zenica, Bosnia / St. Louis Park, Minn.) and Holly Schiedermayer (Jr., Waupaca, Wis.). Mucic, an All-MIAC volleyball player, missed out on Spring Semester games last season while on a study-abroad program, but before she left averaged 7.4 points and 4.7 rebounds through 10 games. She started this year's campaign by being named to the St. Norbert Tip-Off tourney All-Tournament squad. Schiedermayer produced 4.2 points and 3.4 rebounds in just 12 minutes a game.

Twin sisters Jessica Rene (Jr., Eau Claire, Wis. / Memorial) and Shannon Rene (Jr., Eau Claire, Wis. / Memorial) give Macalester a pair of dangerous shooting threats from long range. With the loss of two starting guards, they will play bigger roles. Last season, Jessica contributed 9.3 points a game and ranked fourth in the MIAC in three-point accuracy (43% -- 38-for-89), ninth in three's made (1.7 per game), and third in assist-to-turnover ratio. Shannon ranked 12th in the conference in three-pointers made (1.6).

Macalester will also look for some back court production from Kyanna Jones (So., Brooklyn Park, Minn. / Osseo). Maggie Wood (Jr., Oregon, Wis. / Madison Edgewood) adds depth to the back court. Forward Audrey Mills (Jr., Forest Lake, Minn) was injured last year but returns for depth in the post area.

"We're a team with limited experience at the varsity level," reports Coach Thompson. "We are looking to improve with each game and have our new players step up and contribute."



Saint Benedict

Coach: Mike Durbin

Career Record: 541-143 (24 seasons)

2009-10 Finish: Tied 1st (18-4 MIAC, 21-6 overall)

Saint Benedict Season Preview

The College of Saint Benedict basketball team returns all but one player from last year's MIAC Co-Championship team. With six seniors leading the way along with young talent waiting in the wings, the Blazers are prepared to contend for a sixth consecutive MIAC championship.

CSB collected a 21-6 overall record and an 18-4 conference mark, earning them a share of the conference title and the number one seed in the MIAC Playoffs. After beating St. Catherine in the second round in overtime, the Blazers fell short against fifth seeded St. Thomas in an overtime loss. The defeat ended the season for Saint Ben's as they did not receive an at-large bid into the NCAA Tournament.

Head coach Mike Durbin is at the helm for his 25th season at CSB. Durbin owns a 541-143 (.791) career head coaching record. Under Durbin's direction, CSB has won or shared the MIAC title 13 times.

Two All-MIAC selections in senior post Heather Gillund and senior wing Amy Stifter lead the way for the Blazers. Gillund, also a conference all-defensive pick, led the MIAC with a .546 field goal percentage and averaged 15 points, 6.6 rebounds and 3.3 blocks per game. Stifter, a two-time all-conference honoree, averaged 14.4 points and a .386 three-point field goal percentage. Also contributing to CSB are all-conference honorable mention choice senior forward Laura Canton and senior point guard Devin Bowlin. Canton scored 9.5 points per game and compiled a .393 three-point field goal percentage. Bowlin notched 3.96 assists per game and led the MIAC with a 2.38 assist/turnover ratio.

With outstanding leadership as well as veteran and first-year talent, the Blazers are prepared and focused on capturing another conference championship and their fifth NCAA Tournament appearance in seven years.



St. Catherine

Coach: Gary Rufsvold

Career Record: 52-51 (4 seasons)

2009-10 Finish: Tied-6th (10-12 MIAC, 12-15 overall)

St. Catherine Season Preview

The St. Kate's basketball team is looking forward to improving on last year's success. Last season they finished tied for 6th in the conference in the regular season and qualified for the playoffs. The Wildcats then won their first conference playoff game in program history by upsetting the #3 seed Concordia Cobbers in the first round. This was also the first time in MIAC basketball playoff history a #6 seed defeated a #3 seed. Unfortunately, they were defeated in overtime of the semi-final game by the #1 seed, Saint Benedict Blazers.

Returning this year for the Wildcats is two time All-Conference senior forward Laura Kalbfell who has led the team in scoring and rebounds each of the last two seasons. She is 28 points away from reaching 1000 points in her career. Kalbfell is one of three captains on the squad. The other two are also key returners, Sonja Ellingson and Quinn Halverson. Ellingson tallied 201 points last season and lead the team in free throw percentage. Halverson chipped in 99 points and 23 steals on the year in 2009-2010.

In addition to a number of quality returners, St. Kate's welcomes two first year athletes who look to contribute early and often to the team. Madison Pertler, a 5'11" forward from Denfield high school in Duluth, MN and Kristen Lee, a 5'10" forward from Dawson-Boyd high school in Dawson, MN. Lee scored over 1000 points in her high school career and Pertler played in a number of all star games before coming to SCU.



Saint Mary's

Coach: Mandy Pearson

Career Record: 13-62 (3 seasons)

2009-10 Finish: Tied 11th (4-18 MIAC, 5-20 overall)

Saint Mary's Season Preview

If there is one thing that Saint Mary's University women's basketball coach Mandy Pearson wants her Cardinals to do this season, it's trust.

Trust themselves, and more importantly, trust each other.

If they can do that, Pearson believes this year's Cardinals could find themselves competing for an MIAC playoff spot.

"Trusting in themselves will be huge," Pearson said. "I think if we do that, and I believe we are doing that, we have the potential to have a good season. The playoffs are the goal, and I believe that the girls think it's something they believe they can achieve."

And if the first few weeks of practice are any indication, Pearson may be right.

"The competitive level and intensity of the practices has been raised," said Pearson. "Part of it is everyone believing they can do well, and part of it is the chemistry level and leadership of the team."

Back for the Cardinals are the team's three leading scorers from a year ago — including First-Team All-MIAC selection Jess Miller (Carver, Minn.) and All-MIAC First-Year performer Jessica Thone (Woodbury, Minn.).

Miller returns after scoring a team-high 350 points (14.0 ppg) a year ago, while also leading the team in scoring in 13 of their 25 games. She scored 10 or more points in 20 of the team's 25 games, and netted 20 or more points three times — including a career-best 29 points on Dec. 7 against Gustavus. Miller, who has started every game in her collegiate career — a span of 75 straight games — enters her senior season needing 146 points to become the ninth SMU women's basketball player to score 1,000 career points.

Thone, meanwhile, enjoyed a banner freshman season, scoring 244 points (9.8 ppg), while also accounting for three of the Cardinals' five 20-point performances last season (27, 22 and 21 points). She also led the team in 3-pointers (45) and chipped in 67 assists.

Add Cherie Kulig (Independence, Wis.) — who averaged 9.5 ppg last season and has been a regular in the Cardinal lineup the past three seasons — and Pearson has an explosive nucleus to build around.

"We will once again rely on those three for consistent scoring, but they won't be the only ones," Pearson said. "Our inside game has improved a ton from last season and we're also expecting big things out of our post players."

"I'm extremely excited to get the season going," added Pearson, whose squad kicks off the regular season on Nov. 16, playing host to UW-Platteville in a 7 p.m. nonconference game at the SMU Gym. "We have all the tools and the leadership — this is the year we are ready to turn the corner."



St. Olaf

Coach: Dave Stromme

Career Record: 17-58 (3 seasons)

2009-10 Finish: Tied 9th (5-17 MIAC, 5-20 overall)

St. Olaf Season Preview

The St. Olaf women's basketball program hopes to build on momentum it gained in the second half of the 2009-10 season behind a pair of seniors, an experienced sophomore class and talented first years as it prepares for 2010-11.

St. Olaf went 5-20 last winter while relying its first year class. Each of the Oles' top four and five of the top six scorers were first years in 2009-10.

GUARDS

The Oles return their point guard, Mackenzie Wolter, who had to learn on-the-fly in her first season. Wolter was the team's second-leading scorer (9.7 points/night) while leading the league in minutes by almost two minutes a contest. She was ninth in the MIAC in assists, fourth in free throw percentage and had 11 double-digit scoring efforts while playing the entire 40 minutes four times and at least 36 minutes 17 times.

Wolter will get a spell this season at the point, or play the off-guard spot at times, with the additions of transfer Kirstee Rotty and first year Brittany Webber. Rotty, a two-time team MVP at Farmington High School, joins the team after playing for the MIAC title volleyball team in the fall. Webber, who played her high school basketball at Lion's Gate Academy, was a two-time all-league pick.

Sophomore Samantha Zopfi will also return to the backcourt after averaging 5.6 points/game in her first season. Zopfi went 9-for-16 from the arc in her final three games, and will compete for the starting spot at the off-guard.

Becca Neuger, a three-sport athlete at St. Olaf, is back as one of the team's two seniors. Neuger played in 16 games last season, starting six, and should provide support at either of the guard spots.

The team has also added Jess Wilson, a standout softball player at St. Olaf, to the roster.

FORWARDS

The Oles will have an array of options at the forward spots. Senior Terin Euerle will lead the team's rebounding and defensive efforts as one of the toughest forwards in the MIAC. She was named the team MVP last season after leading the team in rebounding (7.0/game) and shooting a team-best 51.1 percent from the floor.

Katie Lauer, a MIAC All-Rookie Team selection last year, returns after averaging a team-high 12.5 points a game as a first year. She finished 13th in the league in scoring and had 15 double-digit scoring efforts. Lauer, who had a season-ending injury in the team's game at Gustavus in February, should be full-strength when the season starts in November.

Eileen O'Donoghue, who was fourth on the squad in scoring as a first year, will be back as a inside-outside threat. O'Donoghue had a handful of offensive outbursts in 2009-10 and is one of the team's primary perimeter shooters.

Maddie Ehrich will also get opportunities to spark the Oles. Ehrich, a slashing left-handed forward, joins the team after collecting an astounding 1,764 points and 1,175 rebounds in her high school career.

First year Addy Bates could also see time for the Oles this season. Bates, a 5-10 guard/forward was a two-time all-conference honoree at Nevada (Iowa) High School.

POSTS

Sophomore Erin Haglund, who had a solid first year campaign, will hold down the interior. Haglund shot 45.4 percent from the floor while averaging 8.2 points and 3.7 rebounds a game in 2009-10. She, with Wolter, was one of two Oles to start each of the team's 25 games last year.

Elise Raney will spell and, at times, join Haglund in the front court. The athletic, long-armed Raney was a three-time letterwinner at Egan High School.

Sophomore Ashley Menzel will also see the floor. Menzel, a versatile post who can shoot from the perimeter, appeared in 24 games last season.



St. Thomas

Coach: Ruth Sinn
Career Record: 85-49 (5 seasons)
2009-10 Finish: 5th (15-7 MIAC, 21-8 overall)

St. Thomas Season Preview

The Tommies return eight of their top 11 players from a 21-8, NCAA playoff team, led by Preseason All-American center Rachel Booth. Coach Ruth Sinn's team will look to contend for a conference championship and top-25 national ranking. After playing all of their 2009-2010 games off campus, St. Thomas has a new home court inside the \$52 million Anderson Recreation and Athletic Complex.

The Tommies placed fifth in the 12-team MIAC race last season. But UST rode a late-season wave and won three road games in six days to claim the conference playoff championship -- the first ever by a No. 5 seed. That punched their ticket into the NCAA playoffs and St. Thomas' second national tournament opportunity in the last nine seasons. They went 10-0 when they held opponents under 60 points.

The Tommies' 13 road wins last winter ranked among the best in college basketball. UST has a conference best 31 road wins over the last three seasons. The Tommies became the first MIAC playoff team in any sport to win three conference playoff road games in one week. Construction of the new AARC forced the Tommies to play all 29 games off campus, thus their seven "home" wins came down the street in St. Paul at Concordia University and at Macalester.

In an eight-day span from Feb. 20-27, the Tommies went on the road and ended the season of playoff hopeful Hamline (77-69), then ended the seasons of Macalester (60-52), Gustavus (63-60) and St. Benedict (65-62 in overtime).

The 6-foot-2 Booth, who played the previous two seasons at St. Cloud State, was a force in the last half of the season and helped UST win 12 of its last

16 games. She averaged 18 points, 10 rebounds and nearly five blocks over that 16-game span. She was MIAC's lone player to make first-team All-Region by D3hoops.com. She also made first-team all-conference, was chosen for the six-player All-Defensive Team, and was a two-time conference Player of the Week. She led the MIAC in blocks and rebounds and also ranked in the top five in points and field-goal percentage. She broke UST school records for blocked shots in a game (eight) and season (93).

Last winter, Booth played for her fifth different head coach in five seasons-- she endured coaching changes at DeLaSalle High and in her first two college seasons at St. Cloud, then transferred to UST. Sinn said she expects Booth to be even more dangerous this season as she gets continuity with one system.

Booth is among three Tommies to make first-team All-MIAC in their careers, along with junior guard Ali Johnson (2009-10) and senior guard Becky Theisen (2010-11). Johnson, who averaged 10.2 points in her first season as a starter, just missed the school record last season as she sank 63 3-point baskets and converted 94% at the foul line (30-of-32). Theisen has played in

81 career games and has 553 points and 68 steals while converting 83% from the foul line. UST is 17-1 over the last two seasons when Theisen scores in double figures.

Senior stopper Jazmin Townsend (Career: 84 games, 388 points, 74% FT, 75 steals, 45 blocks) might be the conference's most underrated player having never received MIAC postseason recognition despite being a shut-down defender along the perimeter.

Juniors Sarah Smith and Carolyn Dienhart have played extensively the last two seasons, and sophomores Kellie Ring and Haley Loesch and junior Maggie Bryant are also expected to contribute this season. The Toms have a seven-player freshman class which includes a Minnesota Ms. Basketball finalist in Edina High career scoring leader Taylor Young; 6-2 post Maggie Weiers of New Prague; and Wisconsin all-state guard Kelly Brandenburg.

St. Thomas has won 19 or more games in 22 of the last 30 seasons, and in its 33-year history has 637 wins. That includes a 37-26 postseason record. UST had a run of 15 consecutive NCAA playoff berths end in 2005-06 but has been in the postseason (MIAC or NCAA playoffs) 23 of the last 24 seasons.

UST set a school-record last season in free-throw shooting at 75.5%, led by Johnson (94%), Theisen (88%), Smith (83%) and Townsend (82%).

St. Thomas will have a January 29 party to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its 1990-91 national champion team. This season's motto is "A season. A Journey. and Lifetime."