

2019-20 MIAC Women's Basketball Preview

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BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – For the third year in a row and fifth in the last six, Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) women's basketball coaches have selected the University of St. Thomas as the favorite to win the league. The Tommies earned nine first-place votes for a total of 119 points in the annual MIAC Women's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll, released on Tuesday.

St. Thomas will open the 2019-20 season ranked in the top-10 of both the [WBCA](#) and [D3hoops.com](#) Top 25 Polls. The Tommies advanced to the NCAA Division III Final Four last March and have not lost a game to a MIAC opponent since January of 2016; however, St. Thomas returns only a third of last year's top 12 contributors with just one starter -- junior forward **Kaia Porter** -- back in the lineup. The NCAA Elite 90 recipient for Division III Women's Basketball last season, Porter also earned All-Region honors after connecting on 56.4 percent of her shots from the floor and a MIAC-best 45.7 percent of her three-pointer last season. She was one of two MIAC players and only 25 women nationwide named to [D3hoops.com's Preseason All-America Teams](#) on Monday.



Preseason All-America forward Kaia Porter and the Tommies are favored to win the MIAC in 2020.

Augsburg picked up three first-place votes and 113 points to finish second in the Preseason Coaches' Poll. The Auggies earned their first-ever trip to the MIAC Playoff Championship last season and return four starters as well as their top reserve to the lineup this year. Among those back is Preseason All-America guard **Tamira McLemore**, who became just the seventh player in program history to reach 1,000 career points when she did so as a junior last year. McLemore enters her final season with 1,129 career points, fourth-most in program history.

Bethel is third in MIAC Coaches' Poll with 101 points in the balloting. The Royals went 20-7 last season, marking the seventh time in the last three-plus decades the team has hit the 20-win mark, and the fourth time in the last six seasons. Forward **Taite Anderson** is back after earning a third straight All-MIAC nod last March. Anderson averaged 16.7 points per game last season, second-best among all MIAC scorers. She also reached the free throw line more than any other player in the conference, converting on 95 of her 163 attempts last year.

Gustavus is fourth in the Coaches' Poll, garnering 87 points. The Gusties went 15-12 overall last season, qualifying for the MIAC Playoffs for a league-best 19th time before falling in the semifinals to the eventual champion Tommies. No seniors appear on the 2019-20 Gustavus roster, but the Gusties will return seasoned veteran **Ava Gonsorowski** to the lineup. The inaugural MIAC Women's Basketball Rookie of the Year recipient and last remaining starter from the Gusties' 2018 NCAA Sweet 16 team, Gonsorowski has started 49 of the team's 58 games over the last two seasons.

Saint Benedict picked up 78 points to land at No. 5 in the Poll. CSB went 10-4 after last year's holiday break to send the Bennies to the MIAC Playoffs for the fourth straight season. Saint Ben's was propelled by the play of point guard **Megan Thompson**, who earned First Team All-MIAC honors in both basketball and soccer last season. Thompson averaged 13.1 points per game on the court last year and will be fresh off the soccer pitch again this season after setting a new single-season program record with 17 goals in as many games for the playoff-bound CSB soccer team.

Saint Mary's collected 65 points in the preseason balloting. The Cardinals went 9-9 in MIAC play last season, qualifying for the conference tournament for the second year in a row and seventh time in the last eight seasons. While SMU will be tasked with replacing one of the finest two-sport athletes in school history in graduated basketball and volleyball standout Brandi Blattner, the Cardinals' lineup will not be without star power. Sophomore guard **Brooklyn Paulson** started all 26 of the team's games in her debut season last year, averaging 10.7 points per game with 44 three-pointers in MIAC play en route to MIAC Co-Rookie of the Year honors.

St. Catherine is seventh in the Poll with 59 points. The Wildcats were 7-3 at home last season and have reached the postseason two of the last three years. St. Catherine will return two-time All-MIAC guard **Danica Cambrice** to the lineup this winter. Cambrice started 17 games as a junior, averaging 15.5 points and 4.9 rebounds per contest, reaching double-digit point totals in 18 of the 20 games in which she played. Cambrice has totaled 804 points in 61 career games and will likely become the ninth Wildcat in program history to reach 1,000 career points later this season.

Hamline received 51 points in the preseason balloting. At 13-12 last year, the Pipers earned their first winning season since the 2012-13 campaign. Hamline will look to carry that momentum over to this season with an experienced group of core players back in the lineup, including All-MIAC selection **Reilly Geistfeld**. The St. James, Minn. native scored a MIAC-best 305 points in conference games last season, with 105 of those points coming on free throws. Geistfeld also averaged 8.5 rebounds per game last year, the fifth-highest clip in the MIAC. She finished her junior campaign with 909 career points and figures to be the 12th player in program history to join the 1,000-point club later this year.

St. Olaf picked up 44 points in the balloting. The Oles saw significant improvement last season, more than doubling their win total from 2017-18. MIAC Co-Rookie of the Year **K'Lynn Lewis** leads a talented group of returners to Northfield this season. The sophomore guard averaged 13.8 points, 3.6 rebounds, and 3.0 assists per game, reaching double figures in 20 contests during her first collegiate season.

Lewis' 344 points on the year are the eighth-most in a single-season in program history.

Concordia received 26 points in the preseason balloting. The Cobbers were the best free throw shooting team in the MIAC last season, leading the league with a 71.5 percentage overall. Forward **Elizabeth Birkemeyer** returns to the lineup after starting 21 games for the Cobbers last season. The junior scored in double figures three times in the final three weeks, including a 20-point showing in the penultimate game of the year.

Macalester also received 26 points in the voting. The Scots played well at home last season, where four of the team's six wins came - including a pair of conference victories in the final two weeks of the year. Guard **Justin Barraza** was a bright spot for Macalester all season and was one of just three sophomores to be named All-MIAC in 2018-19. Playing in all 25 games, Barraza averaged a team-high 13.6 points and set a new program record with 68 three-pointers on the year.

Carleton received 23 points in the preseason balloting. The Knights got off to a hot start last season, winning three of the team's first four games. The Knights will have guard **Katie Chavez** back in the lineup this season after missing all of last year. As a sophomore two years ago, Chavez tallied a MIAC-best 61 assists in league play to go along with 44 three-pointers - third-most in the conference.

Complete 2019-20 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.

2019-20 MIAC Women's Basketball Preseason Coaches' Poll

Rank	Institution (First-Place Votes)	Total
1.	St. Thomas (9)	119
2.	Augsburg (3)	113
3.	Bethel	101
4.	Gustavus	87
5.	Saint Benedict	78
6.	Saint Mary's	65
7.	St. Catherine	59
8.	Hamline	51
9.	St. Olaf	44
T10.	Concordia	26
T10.	Macalester	26
12.	Carleton	23

2020 MIAC Women's Basketball Playoffs

The 2020 MIAC Women's Basketball Playoffs will feature the top six teams in the conference standings playing in a high-seed-host, single-elimination postseason tournament, and will be played in a Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday format. The top two seeds will receive a bye to the semifinal round, while the No. 3 seed will host the No. 6 seed, and the No. 4 seed will host the No. 5 seeds during the quarterfinals, which will be held Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2019. The top remaining seed will play at the No. 2 seed and the lowest remaining seed will play at the No. 1 seed during the semifinals, which are scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 27. The Playoff Championship game is set for Saturday, Feb. 29, with the two semifinal winners meeting on the home court of the top remaining seed. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2020 NCAA Division III Women's Basketball Tournament.

Odds and Ends

-The MIAC will see two new faces on the sidelines this season, with the arrivals of head coaches Kim Wagers at Concordia and Katie Kollar at Macalester. Wagers played four seasons of college basketball at Minn.-Duluth before becoming a top assistant coach at Wis.-Eau Claire. She is now the 10th coach in the 45-year history of Concordia women's basketball. Kollar was a record-setting shooter at Nazareth College of Rochester before transitioning into coaching. She comes to Macalester from SUNY Cobleskill, where she served as head coach of the Fighting Tigers for the last four seasons.

-Five MIAC coaches have been at their current institutions for more than a decade. Saint Benedict's Mike Durbin leads the way, entering his 34th season at CSB. Jon Herbrechstmeyer is heading into his 18th season at Bethel, while the 2019-20 campaign will be Ruth Sinn's 15th at St. Thomas. Tammy Metcalf-Filzen retired following her 13th season at Carleton in 2009-10, but will be back for year-14 as the program's interim head coach this season. Across town in Northfield, Dave Stromme will enter his 13th year at his alma mater, St. Olaf.

-Four MIAC coaches played collegiately in the conference. Bethel's Herbrechstmeyer played men's basketball at Gustavus, while Ruth Sinn (St. Thomas) and Laurie Kelly (Gustavus) played for the Tommies and Tammy Metcalf-Filzen (Carleton) was an Ole.

For the Record

The MIAC continues to overhaul its sport record books to provide a better historical perspective of the conference and the accomplishments of its student-athletes over the last century. The 39-page MIAC Women's Basketball Record Book contains annual conference championship information, year-by-year standings, all-time award winners, individual records, and more. The information included in the 2019-20 Record Book is based on available data and research for additional historical documents is ongoing. The 2019-20 MIAC Women's Basketball Record Book is now available for download [here](#).

Celebrating a Century

The MIAC is celebrating its [100-year anniversary](#) throughout the 2019-20 season. The conference's Centennial celebration will highlight the many outstanding moments, memories, and individuals who helped build the MIAC over the last century. Initiatives will include student-athlete, coach, and administrator spotlights, historical photos showcasing the evolution of MIAC sports and teams through the years, recognition of former MIAC student-athletes who continued their time in the conference as coaches and administrators, and more. The official #MIAC100 webpage is housed at <https://www.miacathletics.com/miac100>.