

2007 MIAC Women's Golf Championship Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. (Courtesy of Andy Johnson, Macalester College) -- The three-day battle for the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) women's golf championship begins Saturday, Oct. 6, at Bunker Hills Golf Course in Coon Rapids. This is the first time the men and women have contested their championships at the same venue at the same time and this is the second year of the three-day format. The winning teams are awarded automatic berths into next spring's NCAA Division III championships.



A year ago, St. Thomas rolled to an easy win on the strength of an MIAC all-time best 316 team score on the final round to claim its sixth straight title and will try to become the first program to win seven in a row (Concordia's streak of six in a row was topped in 2001 by UST). The Tommies return five all-conference players and all five are currently ranked in the top-12 in the MIAC this fall for lowest average score.

The Tommies, however, will have to work hard for their seventh consecutive crown because Gustavus Adolphus is also one of the nation's top-ranked teams. Gustavus, in fact, placed third at last spring's NCAA championships (UST was fifth) and has defeated St. Thomas already this fall at the Wartburg Invitational and at the Division III Midwest Classic. St. Thomas beat Gustavus at the Wisconsin-Eau Claire Fall Invitational.

Defending conference medalist Holly Noble walked away with last year's tournament by a remarkable 17 strokes following rounds of 76, 75 and 77. UST teammate Laura Heck was individual co-champion last month at the DIII Classic and placed third earlier at Eau Claire. Laura Klatt tied for runner-up honors at the MIAC's last fall, while Megan Hanson and Katie Potts are also returning All-MIAC players from a year ago.

Gustavus' lineup is just as impressive as the Golden Gusties return All-MIAC golfers Kali Griggs (fourth last year), Rachel Roberg (fifth) and Kimbra Kosak (10th). Griggs boasts the MIAC's best fall average through late September at 78.5 and was medalist at the Wartburg Invitational with a 147 score. She was also third at the DIII Classic. Roberg tied UST's Heck for first place at the DIII Classic and Kosak placed third at Wartburg.

After the top two, it's anyone guess who will mount the biggest challenges. Macalester took the third spot last year with an all-time best finish in the program's history, and returns All-American Karla Leon and last spring's Minnesota state tourney medalist Jordan Matheson. Leon comes in with an 81.3 average, currently fifth-best, and Matheson – last year's MIAC runner-up - is right behind at 82.0. Katrina Wood was runner-up at the Eau Claire tourney and ninth at the DIII Classic, and leads the way for the Carleton Knights. The highest-finishing teams behind the Gusties and Tommies at the Midwest Classic were Saint Benedict and Concordia.

Individually, of the top-11 finishers from last year's tournament, ten return this year. Only Carleton's Kassie Wells graduated.

Augsburg

Coach: Laura Patrick

2006 Finish: 9th (+309)

Augsburg Players to Watch
Kelsey Corrick (Fr., Glencoe, Minn./Glencoe-Silver Lake)
Johanna Frykmark (Sr., Stockholm, Sweden/Rollingby Gymnasium)
Stef Sanders (So., Lafayette, Colo./Fairview)
Ellen Watters (Jr., Lindstrom, Minn./Chisago Lakes)
Stef Zappa (Fr., Minneapolis, Minn./Patrick Henry)

Augsburg Season Preview

The Augsburg College women's golf team enters the MIAC championships with a very young lineup, with four newcomers and one returner from last season. The team has shown improvement and has hopes of improving from last season's ninth-place finish.

Newcomers Stef Zappa (Fr., Minneapolis, Minn./Patrick Henry HS) and Johanna Frykmark (Sr., Stockholm, Sweden/Rollingby Gymnasium HS) have team-leading stroke averages of 92.17 apiece. Both have shot four rounds in the 80s this season, including a season-best 84 from Frykmark in the second round of the Concordia-Moorhead Invitational on Sept. 9. Zappa's best round was an 87 in the opening round of the Wisconsin-Eau Claire Blugold Invitational on Sept. 1.

Returner Ellen Watters (Jr., Lindstrom, Minn./Chisago Lakes HS) and newcomers Kelsey Corrick (Fr., Glencoe, Minn./Glencoe-Silver Lake HS) and Stef Sanders (So., Lafayette, Colo./Fairview HS) continue to show promise this season for the Auggies.

Carleton

Coach: Eric Sieger (7th season)

2006 Finish: 4th (+182)

Carleton Players to Watch

Katrina Wood (Jr., Duluth, Minn./Marshall School)

Carleton Season Preview

Carleton heads into the 2007 conference tournament coming off last year's fourth-place finish, the best in program history, looking to replicate or even improve on that finish.

The Knights have posted the MIAC's fourth-best average this season at 353.5, a little more than a stroke behind Macalester. Carleton figures to battle the Scots, along with St. Benedict, Concordia and St. Olaf, for an upper-half finish.

The Knights will be led by a junior and a first-year player at this year's championships. Katrina Wood, who rallied at last year's conference tournament to be one of three newcomers to earn all-conference honors, has paced the Knights with a 82.1 average this fall, finishing in the top 10 in all five of her events. She was runner-up at the UW-Eau Claire Fall Invitational. Laura Knutson (Fy./Edina, Minn.) leads all MIAC first-year players with her 85.8 stroke average and has notched three top 10s in five starts. Senior Sarah Ingebritsen (Seattle/Lewis & Clark) is having a career year and will be joined by rookies Meghan Gajare (Kalamazoo, Mich./Portage Central) and Louise Buckler (Blaine, Minn./St. Paul Academy) in the line-up.

The Knights, true to their youthful line-up, have posted an up-and-down fall. They played very well at the Concordia Invitational, matching the team scoring record with a final-round 333, as Knutson set a new first-year scoring record with a five-over par 77. Last weekend, though, the Knights struggled to an eighth-place finish at the Division III Midwest Classic, ending up behind St. Benedict and Concordia for the first time this season.

"Our goal is to improve on last year's finish," Eric Sieger, Carleton's head coach, said. "We'll need to get consistent play from the bottom of our line-up and Laura and Katrina will need to be solid all weekend.

"We've had a better fall than I anticipated with such a young squad, and it would be great to finish it off with a great performance at the conference tournament."

Concordia

Coach: John Whartnaby (3rd season)

2006 Finish: 5th (+194)

Concordia Players to Watch

Afton Pender (So., Cohasset, Minn./Grand Rapids)

Hilary Vokovan (Fr., Coon Rapids, Minn.)

Erin Douglass (Sr., Northfield, Minn.)

Concordia Season Preview

The Concordia women's golf team will bring one of its deepest teams in recent history to the MIAC Women's Golf Tournament on Oct. 6-8 at Bunker Hills GC in Coon Rapids, Minn. The Cobbers have lately been a team dominated by one player with several other golfers rounding out the top five. This season, thanks to a banner recruiting year by third-year head coach John Whartnaby, Concordia will have four golfers that have all produced solid scores during the 2007 season.

Leading the way for the young CC team will be junior Afton Pender (Cohasset, Minn./Grand Rapids HS). Pender earned MIAC All-Conference honors in 2006 after finishing in fifth place, and is currently leading the team in 2007 with an 85.7 average per round. Her top round of the season came in the UND Invite when she shot a career-best 78 in the opening day of competition. It was the first time in her two-plus seasons at Concordia that she has finished with a score in the 70's.

Like the men, the team's second golfer is one of a solid group of freshman. Hilary Vokovan (Coon Rapids, Minn.) has a 91.2 stroke average in the fall but has put together two straight rounds in the 80's and is coming off a top 40 finish at the highly-competitive UND Invite.

The third and fourth golfers for the Cobbers will be sophomore Amy Hintzen (Sauk Centre, Minn.) and senior Erin Douglass (Northfield, Minn.). Hintzen is third on the team in stroke average in 2007, carding a 94.8 average over six rounds. She shot a season-best 89 in the first round of the UND Invite. Douglass has been in the top three of the team for the past two seasons and will be hoping to give the team low numbers from her No.3 or No.4 spot. She has not been able to play on a consistent basis in 2007 due to her pursuit of a degree in the nursing field but has shown promise by finishing as the team's No.2 golfer at the Division III Midwest Classic where she shot rounds of 87 and 94 to finish in 27th place.

Gustavus

Coach: Scott Moe (5th season)

2006 Finish: 2nd (+135)

Gustavus Players to Watch

Rachel Roberg (Sr., Rice Lake, Wis.)

Kimbra Kosak (Jr., Grand Rapids, Minn.)

Kali Griggs (So., Burnsville, Minn.)

Gustavus Season Preview

The Gustavus women's golf team will once again look to contend for the MIAC Championship in 2007. The Gusties have finished second in five of the last six years and will once again battle St. Thomas for the title. Coach Scott Moe's squad will be led by returning all-conference players Rachel Roberg (Sr., Rice Lake, Wis.), Kimbra Kosak (Jr., Grand Rapids, Minn.), and Kali Griggs (So., Burnsville, Minn.). Griggs finished fourth at the conference meet last year, followed by Roberg in fifth, and Kosak in tenth.

The Gusties have played very well this fall winning the Wartburg Invitational and the Division III Midwest Classic. Griggs, who claimed medalist honors at the Wartburg Invitational, leads the team in stroke average at 78.5 per round through six rounds. Roberg, who tied for medalist honors at the Midwest Classic, ranks second on the team with a stroke average of 81.2, and Kosak is third at 81.8 strokes per round. Others expected to contribute for Gustavus are sophomore Amanda Johnson (Bemidji, Minn.), and first year Katie Schenfeld (Indianola, Iowa). Gustavus is averaging 325.7 strokes per round through six rounds this fall.

Macalester

Coach: Martha Nause (7th season)

2006 Finish: 3rd (+169)

Macalester Players to Watch
Karla Leon (So., Quito, Ecuador)
Jordan Matheson (Jr., Vancouver, B.C.)

Macalester Season Preview
Macalester placed an all-time best third at last year's conference championships at Bunker Hills, up four positions from the year before, and is looking for another top-three finish under seventh-year head coach Martha Nause. The Scots rely heavily on the consistent and standout play at the top of the lineup from All-American Karla Leon (So., Quito, Ecuador / Colegio Menor SFQ) and Jordan Matheson (Jr., Vancouver, B.C. / Nichols School – N.Y.). MIAC Freshman of the Year Matheson placed second and Leon was fifth at last year's MIAC championships. Leon placed 13th at last spring's NCAA Division III championships in Florida and in mid-September was named MIAC Golfer of the Week after placing seventh with a 155 at the Illinois Wesleyan Invitational. Winner of the Minnesota Women's Collegiate Golf Association championships last spring at Pebble Creek, Matheson was just a stroke behind Leon at the Illinois Wesleyan tourney and at last year's conference championships took runner-up honors after shooting consistent rounds of 81, 82 and 82. Although the third through fifth players from last year's team graduated, the Scots are looking for newcomers to take their place. Mac's third and fourth golfers this fall season have been Ali Fuhrman (So., Boulder, Colo. / Fairview) and Ellen Bubak (So., Sioux Falls, S.D. / Lincoln), who will be key to the team's final placing.

Saint Benedict

Coach: Patrick Michaud (2nd season)

2006 Finish: 8th (+223)

Saint Benedict Players to Watch
- Ann Dressen (Jr.)
Leigh Bartholomew (Jr.)
April Dammann (So.)

Saint Benedict Season Preview
The Blazers come into the MIAC championship with a couple of new faces and with gained experience from the previous year. Five juniors, four sophomores and two first years round out the Blazer team who will be looking to improve their eighth place finish in the 2006 MIAC championship. The Blazers have finished with average placing this year so far, by coming in tenth place at the Blugold Fall Invitational at Eau-Claire, Wis., and placing fifth place in both the Cobber Open and Concordia Invite. Junior Ann Dressen, along with fellow junior Leigh Bartholomew and sophomore April Dammann have led the Blazers this season in scoring, while the underclassmen have put in their pennies worth and has helped the team finish strong in each meet. The Blazers have the talent with both upper and lower classmen. Do not be surprised if the Blazers upset a few foes during the 2007 MIAC championship.

Saint Mary's

Coach: Jen Trewick (1st season)

2006 Finish: 7th (+216)

Saint Mary's Players to Watch

Katie O'Connor (Sr., Orland Park, Ill.)
Katelyn Rizzi (So., Austin, Minn.)

Saint Mary's Season Preview
The Saint Mary's University women's golf team has shown flashes of brilliance — a back-nine 37 en route to an 84 by Katie O'Connor (Orland Park, Ill.) at the Luther Invitational, a back-nine 39 en route to an 84 by Katelyn Rizzi (Austin, Minn.) at the same Luther tournament, and Rizzi's 89-87 effort at the Division III Midwest Classic.
Problem is, those flashes have been few and far between.
"Katelyn and Katie have both put together some very good rounds this year," said first-year head coach Jen Trewick. "Our biggest problem is, we just aren't deep enough — we aren't getting the scores from our three, four and five golfers we need to have if we are going to compete at this level.
"I think that both Katie and Katelyn have the potential to post nice rounds (at the conference championships), hopefully they can put it all together for three straight days."

St. Olaf
Coach: Luke Benoit (2nd season)

2006 Finish: 6th (+211)

St. Olaf Players to Watch
Lizzy Zahn (So.)
Anna Johnson (Sr.)
Alyssa Zuehl (Jr.)

St. Olaf Season Preview
The St Olaf women's golf team, in their second season under the leadership of head coach Luke Benoit, currently ranks seventh in stroke average out of nine MIAC teams. Their average is 367.8 for five rounds, just .6 higher than Concordia-Moorhead. They have competed against each of the other schools at least once already this season, finishing above both Augsburg and St. Mary's. Top returners include sophomore Lizzy Zahn, senior Anna Johnson, and junior Alyssa Zuehl.
At Luther Invitational St. Olaf placed seventh out of 14 teams, led by Johnson's 13th place finish. Zahn contributed as well, tying for 28th individually. Zahn also was the top scorer in the Ole's 11th place finish at the Midwest Classic, tying for 20th place individually.
The Ole women were sixth in the MIAC last year (1087), ahead of St. Mary's (1,092), St. Benedict (1,099) and Augsburg (1,185).

St. Thomas
Coach: Sara Evens (4th season)

2006 Finish: 1st (+99)

St. Thomas Players to Watch
Holly Noble (Sr.)
Laura Heck (So.)
Laura Klatt (Sr.)
Katie Potts (Sr.)
Megan Hanson (Sr.)

St. Thomas Season Preview
St. Thomas has won six consecutive MIAC women's golf championships and will battle Gustavus in its quest for No. 7. Three of those six titles have come by margins of three or less strokes over runner-up Gustavus, and another close battle appears to be brewing in 2007. In the first six rounds this fall on the same courses, Gustavus has a 1954 stroke total to UST's 1958. Last year the Tommies came in as underdog but rode Holly Noble's runaway medalist victory to post a stunning 36-shot victory over the Gusties in the 54-hole event at Bunker Hills. Gustavus (third) and St. Thomas (fifth) both placed in the top five at nationals last May and have taken turns beating each other over the last 13 months. In 12 head-to-head meetings since last school year, Gustavus has won seven and UST has won five. The Tommies' challenge will be settling on their best lineup, as their Nos. 4-5-6-7 players have flipped each tournament. In six fall rounds, UST has seven of the MIAC's top 16 individual scoring averages -- Laura Heck (79.5), Noble (80.5), Laura Klatt (81.3), Amy Anderson (83.2), Katie Potts (83.8), Megan Hanson (85.7) and Katie Mich (86.5).