

2016-17 MIAC Women's Hockey Preview and Preseason Coaches' Poll

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2016-17 MIAC Women's Hockey Conference Preview

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – The puck is about to drop to start the 2016-17 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) women's hockey season, and if it's anything like its predecessor, fans in the "State of Hockey" are in for a treat.

Parity reigned in the MIAC a year ago, evidenced by a pair of teams deadlocked at the top, sharing the conference title. Both St. Thomas (20-6-2 overall) and Bethel (15-10-2 overall) finished with 26 points and 12-4-2 MIAC records to share the crown, and just six points separated the top six teams in the standings.

For the Tommies, it was their fourth MIAC championship – second only to Gustavus' 13 – and second in three years after also winning in 2013-14. It was Bethel's first women's hockey conference championship in program history, and the Royals became just the fifth MIAC team to win a conference title, joining St. Thomas, the Gusties, Augsburg and Saint Mary's.

Fittingly, those two also met in the MIAC Playoff championship game for the second-straight season, and St. Thomas scored in the third period to pull out a 2-1 win and a third-straight MIAC Playoff title. The Tommies were the MIAC's lone NCAA Tournament representative, where it fell to UW-River Falls.

Things were extremely tight behind the co-champs at the top of the 2015-16 standings. Augsburg had a breakthrough season, going 13-10-3 overall and 10-5-3 in the MIAC, and its 23 points were good for a third-place finish. Concordia (14-12-1, 11-7 MIAC) was just one point behind the Auggies in fourth at 22, and Saint Mary's (10-13-3, 9-7-2 MIAC) and Gustavus (9-11-5, 8-6-4 MIAC) shared fifth place with 20 points, with the Cardinals grabbing the fifth and final Playoff spot on tiebreaker criteria.

Hamline showed impressive improvement under first-year Head Coach Natalie Darwitz, as the Pipers finished seventh (9-13-3, 6-10-2, 14 points). Saint Benedict (7-15-3, 5-10-3, 13 points) was just a point behind Hamline, and St. Catherine (6-14-5, 5-11-2, 12 points) came in just another point behind the Blazers. St. Olaf (2-21-2, 1-15-2, four points) rounded out the 2015-16 standings.

Expectations are high for another competitive season, as the gap between the conference's top and bottom appears to be continually shrinking. Plus, there's a lot of talent back around the league. The Tommies bring back MIAC Player-of-the-Year Kathryn Larson for her senior season, and 11 All-Conference picks and 14 All-MIAC Honorable Mention selections also return to put talent back on each roster.

With the increasing parity and returning star power, the first face-off can't come fast enough.

COACHES CAST THEIR VOTES

After last season's impressive 20-6-2 overall record and MIAC regular-season and Playoff titles, it's no surprise the conference coaches like St. Thomas' prospects of being on top again in 2016-17. UST was voted No. 1 in the annual MIAC Women's Hockey Preseason Coaches' Poll with eight first-place votes and 80 points. The Tommies are getting national attention as well, as they enter the season ranked No. 6 by USCHO.com and No. 8 by D3hockey.com.

The high hopes for Head Coach Tom Palkowski's club starts with the return of Larson, as the talented goal-scorer looks to repeat as MIAC Player-of-the-Year and garner even more All-American accolades. Sophomore goalie Kenzie Torpy is also back after going 20-4-2 in her collegiate debut season, and junior Allison Borgstrom return to anchor the blue line after earning Honorable Mention honors as a sophomore.

After sharing the MIAC title with the Tommies, the coaches expect Bethel to be right back in the thick of the championship picture, as the Royals were picked to finish second with 66 points, and they received votes in the USCHO.com national poll. Reigning MIAC Coach-of-the-Year Brian Carlson is glad to have All-MIAC forward Lauren Kolak back to lead his team, and they'll look for increased production from seniors Megan O'Brien and Hannah Williams in 2016-17.

Concordia also hopes to be in title contention in Head Coach Jason Gregoire's third season, as the Cobbers received 61 points to finish third in the MIAC Preseason Poll. All-MIAC forward Tori Davis – who led the league in goals in conference play – is back for her junior season, and



goalie Andrea Klug and forward Amber Schaack also return after earning All-Conference Honorable Mention honors a year ago, to give the Cobbers a strong, experienced nucleus.

Though Gustavus shockingly missed the Playoffs in 2015-16, coaches expect them to return to the Postseason and contention this season. The Gusties received the other two first-place votes in the Preseason Poll, and finished fourth with 60 points. Gustavus has a pair of talented junior forwards back in All-MIAC pick Erica Power and Diana Draayer, and Erin Moes is back on the blue line after a breakout rookie campaign.

Augsburg earned a trip to the MIAC Playoffs a year ago, and the coaches expect the Auggies to return to the postseason in 2016-17, as they finished fifth in the conference poll with 54 points. Augsburg has a strong group of skaters back, led by senior All-MIAC forward Callen Naasz, and both senior defender Danielle Heitkamp and sophomore forward Megan Johnson are back after earning All-Conference Honorable Mention honors.

Saint Mary's also has plenty of talent back in Winona, Minn., and the Cardinals were picked to finish sixth in the preseason poll with 40 points. All-MIAC junior forward Jamie Henderson is back after leading the team in goals and points, and a pair of talented seniors with Honorable Mention accolades – forward Kassie Lien and goalie Marah Shields – also return for Saint Mary's.

Hamline hopes to continue its rapid rise under Darwitz, as the Pipers finished six points back of the Cardinals in the preseason poll in seventh with 34 points. Hamline has a pair of seniors back to lead the way as the team hopes to work its way into postseason contention, with All-MIAC Honorable Mention picks Jena Kosley (forward) and Jaci Reinke (defense) both returning to St. Paul.

Saint Benedict was selected to finish eighth with 27 points in the MIAC Preseason Coaches' Poll, and appears to have all the pieces in place to keep making progress as well in 2016-17. Senior forward Elli Marvin – the team's leading scorer – returns for her senior season after earning All-Conference honors, and Honorable Mention picks Maddie Rainey (senior defender) and Brigette Miller (junior forward) are also back for the Blazers.

St. Catherine received 18 points to finish ninth in the poll, and the Wildcats hopes started with decorated goalie Kristen Pechacek, as the junior was an All-MIAC selection and a Second Team All-America pick as a sophomore. Forwards Laken Muller and Jordan Soheim are back to lead St. Kate's on the offensive end.

St. Olaf rounded out the bottom spot in the coaches' poll with 10 points, but the Oles are hoping to show big improvement with a talented trio of scorers – each with at least 13 points in 2015-16 – back in Northfield, Minn. Senior defender Hannah Forliti was named All-Conference a year ago, junior Jane Vezina was an Honorable Mention pick, and senior Megan Skelly also provides scoring punch and leadership for St. Olaf.

With anticipation for the new season building to a fever-pitch, the time to drop the puck is almost here. The season opens Friday with six teams in action against nonconference foes, with the rest of the league opening their seasons within the next week. Conference play begins Friday, Nov. 11, and the regular season runs all the way through Saturday, Feb. 18. The MIAC Playoffs will be held over the following two weeks, with the champion advancing to the NCAA Tournament after that.

A CLOSER LOOK

The rest of the 2016-17 MIAC women's Hockey Preview contains complete results from the 2016-17 Preseason Coaches' Poll, helpful links and a preview for each team submitted by their sports information director. The MIAC web site - www.miacathletics.com - will be an outstanding source for MIAC women's hockey news, schedules, scores, stats and more throughout the 2016-17 season.

Visit the [MIAC scoreboard](#) on game days to follow all the action, and download the [MIAC mobile app](#) to have all the information on-the-go. Also, connect to the conference on its [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) pages for updates and interaction all season long.

2016-17 MIAC Women's Hockey Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (nine for first, eight 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.

2016-17 MIAC Women's Hockey Preseason Coaches' Poll		
Rank	Institution	Total
1.	St. Thomas (8)	80
2.	Bethel	66
3.	Concordia	61
4.	Gustavus (2)	60
5.	Augsburg	54
6.	Saint Mary's	40
7.	Hamline	34
8.	Saint Benedict	27
9.	St. Catherine	18

2017 MIAC Women's Hockey Playoffs

The 2017 MIAC Playoffs will feature the top five teams in the conference standings playing in a high-seed-host, single-elimination postseason tournament. The lone quarterfinal game between the No. 4 and No. 5 seeds will now be played Thursday, Feb. 23, with the two semifinal games to follow on Saturday, Feb. 25. The championship game is set for the following Saturday, March 4. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2017 NCAA Division III Women's Hockey Tournament.

| [2017 MIAC Women's Hockey Playoffs](#) |

MIAC Women's Hockey Links

| [Website](#) | [Standings](#) | [Schedule](#) | [Statistics](#) | [News](#) | [Athletes-of-the-Week](#) | [Recordbook](#) | [Archives](#) |

MIAC Team-by-Team Previews

| [AUG](#) | [BU](#) | [CON](#) | [GAC](#) | [HU](#) | [CSB](#) | [SCU](#) | [SMU](#) | [STO](#) | [UST](#) |



AUGSBURG | [Auggies' women's hockey home page](#) |

Head Coach

- Michelle McAteer (7th season)

A Year Ago

- 10-5-3 MIAC (3rd place) | 13-10-3 Overall

In the 2015-16 Postseason

- MIAC playoff semifinalist (L 1-0 (OT) to Bethel)

Players to Watch

- Callen Naasz (F, SR | All-MIAC in 2015-16, All-MIAC Honorable Mention in 2014-15 and 2013-14, MIAC All-Rookie Team in 2013-14; 6G-11A--17P in 2015-16, t-6th in MIAC in assists; Career totals (76 games) of 19G-29A--48P.)
- Danielle Heitkamp (D, SR | All-MIAC Honorable Mention in 2015-16, 2014-15 and 2013-14; MIAC All-Rookie Team in 2013-14; 4G-5A--9P in 2015-16, t-9th among MIAC defenders; Career totals (76 games) of 9G-15A--24P.)
- Megan Johnson (F, SO | All-MIAC Honorable Mention in 2015-16; t-1st on team in scoring in 2015-16 with 11G-7A--18P, tops among MIAC rookies in goals and 3rd among MIAC rookies in points, t-6th in goals and t-11th in points among all MIAC players.)

Did You Know?

- Augsburg goalie Erika Allen earned CoSIDA Academic All-America Division III Women's At-Large second-team honors in 2015-16, becoming the first Augsburg women's hockey player to ever earn CoSIDA Academic All-America honors. An All-MIAC and D3hockey.com All-West Region third-team honoree as a senior in 2015-16, Allen was an exercise science major with a 4.00 grade-point average.



BETHEL | [Royals' women's hockey home page](#) |

Head coach

- Brian Carlson (7th season)

A Year Ago

- 12-4-2 MIAC (t-1st place) | 15-10-2 Overall

Players to Watch

- Lauren Kolak (F, Sr. | 11 G, 5 A, 16 Pts., 2016 All-Conference, MIAC Athlete of the Week 2/22/16)
- Megan O'Brian (F, Sr. | 2 G, 3 A, 5 Pts.)
- Hannah Williams (D, Sr. | 0 G, 3 A, 3 Pts.)

Did You Know?

- The Royals will be traveling over Christmas break to Europe for 11 days. From December 17-27 the squad will play several games against local women's teams in Italy and Switzerland. They will spend half of the trip in northern Italy and the other half in Rome.

CONCORDIA | [Cobbers' women's hockey home page](#) |

Head coach



- Jason Gregoire (3rd season)

A Year Ago

- 11-7-0 MIAC (4th place) | 14-12-1 Overall

Players to Watch

- Andrea Klug (G, Sr. | 2016 MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention; set the school record for shutouts (8) in a single season in 2016))
- Tori Davis (F, Jr. | 2016 MIAC All-Conference; led the MIAC in goals in conference play and was third in overall points in 2016; finished the year with 17 goals and six assists)
- Amber Schaack (F, Sr. | 2016 MIAC All-Conference Honorable Mention; finished third in the MIAC in shots in league games; was third on the team in points with 16)

Did You Know?

- Concordia has 12 newcomers on the roster which is the most since the 2011-12 season.



GUSTAVUS | [Gusties' women's hockey home page](#) |

Head coach

- Mike Carroll (17th season)

A Year Ago

- 8-6-4 MIAC (6th place) | 9-11-5 Overall

Players to Watch

- Erica Power (Forward, Jr. | Top-returning scorer, 11g-9a-20 points last season. 2015-16 All-Conference, 2014-15 All-Conference/All-Rookie Team)
- Erin Moes (Defense, So. | 2015-16 All-Rookie Team, 5g-5a as a first-year defender)
- Diana Draayer (Forward, Jr. | 11 career goals, 26 career points, co-captain last season)

Did You Know?

- The Gusties return 72 percent of their scoring from last season.



HAMLIN | [Pipers' women's hockey home page](#) |

Head coach

- Natalie Darwitz (2nd season)

A Year Ago

- 6-10-2 MIAC (9th place) | 9-13-3 Overall

Players to Watch

- Jena Kosley (F, Sr., tied for team lead with 13 points last year, MIAC HM)
- Jaci Reinke (D., Sr., Led HU with seven goals despite playing just 19 games, three-year regular, MIAC HM)

Did You Know?

- Hamline's nine wins last year were the most they have recorded since the 2007-08 season.



SAINT BENEDICT | [Blazers women's hockey home page](#) |

Head coach

- Jen Kranz (6th season)

A Year Ago

- 5-10-3 MIAC (8th place) | 7-15-3 Overall

Players to Watch

- Elli Marvin (F, Sr | All-MIAC, team-high 16 points, 11 goals)
- Maddie Rainey (D, Sr | All-MIAC Honorable Mention, 6 points, 4 assists)
- Brigitte Miller (F, Jr | All-MIAC Honorable Mention, 16 points, 7 assists, 9 goals)

Did You Know?

- CSB is 3-0-1 – which has been nationally ranked in each game – in the past two seasons. CSB's sweep of UST last year marked the first since 1999-2000.

ST. CATHERINE | [Wildcats' women's hockey home page](#) |

**Head coach**

- Brad Marshall (12th season)

A Year Ago

- 5-11-1 MIAC (9th place) | 6-14-5 Overall

Players to Watch

- Kristen Pechacek (G, Jr. | 2015-16 All-MIAC, 2015-16 CCM Second Team All-America; posted a 4-5-4 record in 2015-16, led the MIAC in save percentage (.960), GAA (1.36) and was fifth in saves (429); ranked No. 2 in the country in save percentage and No. 9 in GAA)
- Laken Muller (F, So. | In 25 games, scored 7 goals with 3 assists for 10 points; led the team in shot percentage (.132) and was tied for lead in goals (7); second on the team in points (10))
- Jordan Solheim (F, Sr. | In 25 games, scored 6 goals with 3 assists for 9 points; was second on the team in goals (6) and third in points (9))

Did You Know?

- Seven Wildcat hockey student-athletes earned Academic All-Conference honors for the 2015-16 winter season.

**SAINT MARY'S** | [Cardinals' women's hockey home page](#) |**Head coach**

- Terry Mannor (12th season)

A Year Ago

- 9-7-2 MIAC (5th place) | 10-13-3 Overall

In the 2015-16 Postseason

- MIAC Playoffs: at Concordia (L, 3-1)

Players to Watch

- Jamie Henderson (Forward, Junior | 26 GP, 13 G, 7 A, 20 Pts. | First-Team All-MIAC ... Led the team in both goals and points, while ranking third in both categories. ... 13 goals are most since 2006-07 season)
- Kassie Lien (Forward, Senior | 25 GP, 5 G, 7 A, 12 Pts. | H-M All-MIAC in 2014-15 ... Finished 2015-16 with the exact same G-A-Pts. totals as the year before—equaling her career high in all three offensive categories)
- Marah Shields (Goalie, Senior | 7 GP, 1.58 GAA, .940 save % | H-M All-MIAC in 2014-15 ... Made 30 or more saves in four of her seven starts last season. ... Made school-record 79 saves vs. UW-Superior on Oct. 31, 2015)

Did You Know?

- Marah Shields (Mitford, Mich.) recorded a school-record 79 saves in the Cardinals' 2-0 loss to UW-Superior on Oct. 31. The 79-save effort—which ranks No. 6 all-time in NCAA Division III history—is 24 saves more than the previous record of 55, set by Nikki Jung against Gustavus on Jan. 21, 2005.

**ST. OLAF** | [Oles' women's hockey home page](#) |**Head coach**

- John Bazzachini (12th season)

A Year Ago

- 1-15-2 MIAC (10th place) | 2-21-2 Overall

Players to Watch

- Jane Vezina (Jr., F | 12 goals, three assists in 2015-16... All-MIAC honorable mention.)
- Hannah Forliti (D, Sr. | All-MIAC in 2015-16... Four goals, nine assists.)
- Megan Skelly (F, Sr. | Career-best 13 points in 2015-16.)

Did You Know?

- St. Olaf took a 10-day trip to Italy this summer... The Oles play five of their first six games at home.

**ST. THOMAS** | [Tommies' women's hockey home page](#) |**Head coach**

- Tom Palkowski (10th season)

A Year Ago

- 12-4-2 MIAC (MIAC Co-Champions) | 20-6-2 Overall

In the 2015-16 Postseason

- Went 2-0 in MIAC playoffs with 2-1 wins over Concordia and Bethel; lost 4-1 at UW-River Falls in NCAA quarterfinals

Players to Watch

- Kathryn Larson (F, Sr., | 2X All-America, MIAC Player of the Year; Captain; 3-year college career: 82 games, 49 goals, 44 assists)
- Kenzie Torpy (G, So., | MIAC All-Rookie Team; 20-4-2, .926 save%, 1.64 GAA)
- Allison Borgstrom (D, Jr., | HM All-MIAC; Captain; Career: 56 games, seven goals, 13 assists.)

Did You Know?

- UST forwards Leah Schwartzman (seven goals, 15 assists in 27 games) and Becca Zarembinski (seven goals, 13 assists in 28 games) were the only conference freshmen out of 41 total honorees to make first team All-MIAC last winter in women's or men's hockey.

[MIAC Women's Hockey Home Page](#)