

2019-20 MIAC Women's Hockey Preview

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BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) women's hockey teams will have work to do in order to replicate last year's historic season that saw two conference squads reach the Frozen Four for the first time ever. However, with St. Thomas and Hamline both gearing up for another run at the national championship and the rest of the teams in the league aiming to break into the national spotlight as well, the conference appears poised for another exciting season on the ice.

Prior to the puck dropping on the new season, MIAC coaches cast their ballots in the conference's annual Preseason Coaches' Poll. St. Thomas received five first-place votes and finished no lower than second on any ballot to claim the top spot in the Poll. The Tommies enjoyed the best season in program history last year, collecting a school-record 25 wins and sweeping the conference regular season and playoff championships en route to a fourth-place finish nationally. The Toms will be challenged to replace four graduated seniors, including All-American goalie and 2018-19 MIAC Player of the Year Kenzie Torpy; however, St. Thomas does return a trio of All-MIAC forwards, led by two-time All-Conference honoree **Rachel Werdin**, who has accounted for 38 goals and 26 assists in 82 career games.



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Hamline landed at the No. 2 spot in the MIAC Preseason Coaches' Poll with five first-place votes and 76 points. The Pipers became the first MIAC women's hockey program in history to play for the NCAA Division III national championship back in March, marking the team's second straight appearance in the Frozen Four. Hamline will attempt to make it three in a row this year and will be in excellent position for one more run at the MIAC and national titles with reigning Laura Hurd Award winner **Bre Simon** back in the lineup for her senior season. The top player in Division III last year, Simon led the nation in scoring with 27 goals and 37 assists. Entering the 2019-20 campaign, Simon has accounted for 75 career goals, needing just three scores to tie the all-time MIAC record of 78. Simon is also within striking distance of former Gustavus scorer Andrea Peterson's MIAC career points record of 185. The Elk River, Minn. native has collected 147 points through three seasons at Hamline.

Augsburg garnered 64 points in the balloting to come in at No. 3 in the Preseason Coaches' Poll. The Auggies suffered just three conference losses last season and punch their fourth straight ticket to the MIAC Playoffs. A key piece of last year's success was the play of All-America defender **Nikki Nightengale**, who led all Division III defensive players in goals with 13 as a junior. Nightengale contributed a goal or assist in 15 of Augsburg's 26 games, logging six multi-point games along the way. She was also one of five MIAC competitors named to the All-USCHO Women's D-III Team, earning Third Team honors after last season.

Gustavus is No. 4 in the Coaches' Poll with 59 total points. The Gusties were 11-4-4 in league play last season and clinched the program's MIAC-best 19th berth in the conference playoffs, advancing to the semifinal round. An at-large selection to the NCAA Tournament two years ago, Gustavus will need to find a way to replace the production and leadership of two-time All-America goaltender Amanda DiNella, who finished her playing career in March as the program's career saves leader. On the offensive side of the ice, the Gusties will be led by **Amelia Vosen**, who earned her first appearance on the All-Conference team last year after posting career highs in assists (7) and points (18), while matching a personal-best with 11 goals. The Gustavus captain also tied for the MIAC lead with four game-winning goals last season.

Concordia came in at No. 5 in the Coaches' Poll after picking up 43 points in the balloting. The Cobbers had their streak of consecutive seasons with a playoff berth snapped at eight last year following a tough February and will look to begin a new postseason streak in 2020. Honorable mention All-MIAC defender **Callie Fagerstrom** will play a key role in determining Concordia's fate, as the junior's impact is felt on both sides of the ice. In addition to her solid play on defense, Fagerstrom has been a weapon on offense as well, totaling four goals and four assists against conference opponents last season.

Saint Mary's is No. 6 in the Poll with 38 points in the preseason balloting. The Cardinals returned to the MIAC Playoffs last season after a two-year absence, marking the program's 12th postseason trip all-time - third-most in conference history. Four Cardinals posted 10 or more points last season, including All-MIAC defender **Natalie Ryan**, who logged team- and career-highs with eight goals and 15 points as a junior last year.

Bethel collected 34 points in the balloting. Another familiar face in the MIAC Playoff picture, the Royals found themselves in unfamiliar territory last season - on the outside looking in after eight straight years of postseason play. BU has not missed the postseason two years in a row since the 2004-05 season and will look to keep it that way. To do that, the Royals will need another big year from forward **Bri Stafne**, who earned All-MIAC honors after leading the team with 10 goals and 11 assists last season.

Saint Benedict received 26 points in the preseason balloting. CSB finished the 2018-19 campaign tied for the program's most wins in a decade with seven. With four one-goal losses, the Bennies were within reach of their first double-digit victory season since 2001-02. Forward **Courtney Conlin** was integral to CSB's success last season, leading the team with eight goals and 14 points. Conlin scored on two power-plays and found the back of the net unassisted on three other goals as well.

St. Catherine notched 24 points in the Coaches' Poll. The Wildcats finished last season with just two losses in their final seven games. Senior defender **Lexi Muller** is one of five returners to have played in all 25 games last season. Muller has suited up for all 75 of the team's games over the last three seasons, totaling eight goals and 24 assists in those appearances.

St. Olaf received nine points in the preseason balloting. The Oles debuted their new on-campus home in January and are set to play 10 games at St. Olaf Ice Arena this winter. Senior forward **Johanna Glaaser** ended the 2018-19 season on a three-game point streak and contributed assists in five games as a junior. Also a standout sprinter on the Oles' track and field team, Glaaser won the MIAC outdoor title in the 400-meter dash in May.

Complete 2019-20 Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (9 for first, 8 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 Hockey Preseason Coaches' Poll

Rank	Institution (First-Place Votes)	Total
1.	St. Thomas (5)	77
2.	Hamline (5)	76
3.	Augsburg	64
4.	Gustavus	59
5.	Concordia	43
6.	Saint Mary's	38
7.	Bethel	34
8.	Saint Benedict	26
9.	St. Catherine	24
10.	St. Olaf	9

2020 MIAC Women's Hockey Playoffs

The **2020 MIAC Women's Hockey 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 be played on Thursday, Feb. 27, with the two semifinal games to follow on Saturday, Feb. 29. The MIAC Championship game is set for the following Saturday, March 7. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2020 NCAA Division III Women's Hockey Tournament.

Odds and Ends

-Saint Mary's announced **Sarah Murray** as its new head coach on June 4, 2019. Murray comes to Winona with a championship pedigree, having won back-to-back high school national titles while playing at Shattuck-St. Mary's and adding two more NCAA Division I national championships as a member of the Minn.-Duluth women's hockey program. Augsburg head coach Michelle McAteer was an assistant on the Bulldogs' staff during Murray's junior and senior seasons, the latter of which culminated in a dramatic triple-overtime victory to win the national championship in 2010. Murray's coaching resume includes a trip to the 2018 Winter Olympics where she served as head coach of the South Korean National Team.

-St. Olaf named **Tracy Johnson** the fourth head coach in program history on March 29, 2019. A Plymouth, Minn. native, Johnson played collegiately at Boston College where she captained the team as a junior and senior, helping the Eagles to the NCAA semifinals in 2006-07 and the national quarterfinals in 2008-09. Prior to coming to St. Olaf, Johnson spent six years at the helm for Stevenson University where she led the Mustangs to an 85-60-11 record and four 14-plus win seasons.

-Five MIAC coaches are entering double-digit seasons at the helm of their respective programs. Mike Carroll leads the way, entering his 21st season as head coach at Gustavus, followed by Brad Marshall coming into his 15th at St. Catherine. St. Thomas' Tom Palkowski is in his 13th year with the Tommies, while Augsburg's Michelle McAteer and Bethel's Brian Carlson are both celebrating a decade at their respective institutions. Three coaches - Marshall, Palkowski, and Concordia's Maureen Greiner - are former MIAC student-athletes, with all three having suited up collegiately for the Tommies.

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>.