

2006 MIAC VOLLEYBALL PREVIEW

The 2006 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) Volleyball season begins with four teams ranked nationally in the top 25 and eight other teams with aspirations of upset. Over the past two seasons Concordia, St. Thomas, Saint Benedict, and Carleton have comprised the top four teams in the conference regular season standings. The 2006 MIAC Preseason Coach's Poll once again has those four teams in the top four and it is likely that the conference champion will come from one of those teams.

Preseason MIAC favorite Concordia comes into 2006 with high expectations. The Cobbers will feature All-American middle hitter Becca Shane and a host of other talented individuals. Reigning MIAC champion St. Thomas will have to replace 2005 MIAC MVP Erika Wetzel, but will return hard-hitting senior Rachelle Dosch. Rounding out the preseason top four are Saint Benedict and Carleton. Saint Benedict received four first-place votes in the preseason coach's poll and will be led by 2005 All-American middle blocker Teri Knapper. Carleton will be experienced as they return five starters from last season including All-MIAC selection Danielle Hargreaves.

The middle tier of teams in the conference include: Bethel, St. Olaf, Macalester, and Gustavus. Junior All-MIAC outside hitter Liz Glesne will lead the Bethel attack in 2006 after a strong Bethel team returned to the MIAC Playoffs last season. 2005 MIAC Playoff Semifinalist St. Olaf will look to All-MIAC seniors Andrea Otteman and Audrey Volstad to lead the Oles. Macalester will feature some talented individuals in All-MIAC outside hitter Lauren Eberhart, 2005 MIAC Rookie of the Year Sonia Muzikarova, and Division I transfer Andrea Hansen. Senior setter Rachelle Jakobs and middle hitter Becca Thompson hope to lead Gustavus back to the MIAC Playoffs.

Saint Mary's, Hamline, Augsburg, and St. Catherine all enter 2006 hoping to bring each of their programs to the next level. Saint Mary's Carolyn Kiefer stepped up in 2005 with a great season at setter and will lead the Cardinals again in 2006. Hamline will bring a more experienced team to MIAC play and will feature middle blocker Dana Luiken and junior All-MIAC setter Angie Asmus. Augsburg will return a core of young players and will look to junior middle hitter Katie LaGrave to be a steady force. St. Catherine also has a young team this season but comes into the season with high hopes of improvement, Emily Van Hon, last season's kill leader for the Wildcats, will lead the team.

2006 MIAC Preseason Volleyball Coach's Poll

(First Place Votes in Parentheses)

- 1. Concordia (6)
- 2. St. Thomas (1)
- 3. Saint Benedict (4)
- 4. Carleton (1)
- 5. Bethel
- 6. St. Olaf
- 7. Macalester
- 8. Gustavus
- 9. Saint Mary's
- 10. Hamline
- 11. Augsburg
- 12. St. Catherine

2006 MIAC Volleyball Playoffs		
Quarterfinals Tuesday, October 31 #6 @ #3 - 7:00pm #5 @ #4 - 7:00pm	Semifinals Thursday, November 2 Winner #3/6 @ #2 - 7:00pm Winner #4/5 @ #1 - 7:00pm	Championship Saturday, November 4 Championship - 7:00pm

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Augsburg College		
Head Coach:	Jessica Rinehart (2nd season / 6-23 overall)	
2005 Record:	6-23 (2-9 MIAC / 11th)	

Key Returners:	Sarah Bradley (OH, Jr., 5-7, International Falls, Minn.) 2005: 143 kills (2.80 KPG) and 116 digs (2.27 DPG); Career: 323 kills (2.43 KPG), 386 digs (2.90 DPG), 24 blocks (1 solo). Katie LaGrave (MH, Jr., 5-11, Okinawa, Japan/Kadena HS) 2005: 179 kills (1.95 KPG), 57 blocks (22 solo, 0.62 BPG); Career: 226 kills (1.70 KPG), 72 blocks (24 solo, 0.54 BPG). Haley Bower (LIB, Jr., 5-6, Brainerd, Minn.) 2005: team-high 395 digs (4.49 DPG), 19 service aces, 22 assists; Career: 505 digs (3.44 DPG), 33 aces, 81 assists. Dani Boner (OH, So., 5-8, Omaha, Neb./Mercy HS) 2005: 144 kills (1.76 KPG), 24 blocks (4 solo), 183 digs, 31 aces.
Season Preview:	Like the building addition currently going up just to the south of the Si Melby Hall gymnasium, the Auggie volleyball program is in the midst of a building project. Last year, head coach Jessica Rinehart laid the foundation in her first season as the Auggies' mentor. This season, with no seniors on the roster, the supporting walls will go up, and the program's improvement should be increasingly evident as the building process continues. "We are a young team with no seniors. This group views it as a positive thing, because we are in the process of building a program," Rinehart said. "The junior class wants two years with everyone together, to build toward being a top conference contender." Augsburg finished 6-23 overall, 2-9 in the competitive Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference last season. With eight letterwinners and four starters back, along with a solid recruiting class, the Auggies are aiming for consistent improvement, with a goal of reaching the six-team MIAC postseason playoffs. There's solid depth at most of the positions on the court for Augsburg this season, and the players returning bring a strong work ethic and commitment to improve the volleyball program, Rinehart said. "Last year, I was really impressed with the work ethic that we established, the commitment to the team, the chemistry of the team and the players' ability to continue to play hard all the way to the end of the season," Rinehart said. "We continued to improve, every single match." A solid core of players return to lead the Auggies. Katie LaGrave (Jr., Okinawa, Japan/Kadena HS), who had 179 kills, a team-best .252 attack percentage and 57 blocks (22 solo) last season, returns to occupy the middle hitter position, following the graduation of Billie Painschab, who set a school record for career blocks (245) in her four seasons. She will join returner Amanda Rueb (So., Minnetonka, Minn./West Lutheran HS) as returners in the middle. On the outside, junior Sarah Bradley (So., International Falls, Minn.) and sophomore Dani Boner (So., Omaha, Neb./Mercy HS) return, along with Kristina Lurken (Jr., Kenyon, Minn./Kenyon-Wanamingo HS). Boner had a strong freshman campaign on the left side, with 144 kills, 183 digs and 31 service aces. Bradley shined late in the season, collecting four kill-dig double-doubles in her final eight matches to end up with 143 kills (2.80 per game) and 116 digs. Haley Bower (Jr., Brainerd, Minn.) had a strong season in 2005 as the team's primary libero (defensive specialist), with 395 digs (4.49 per game). She will return to compete for time in the back row with Tina Quick (Jr., Blaine, Minn./Centennial HS), who returns after not playing last season. She was the team's primary libero in 2004, averaging 3.28 digs per game. Emma Sutton (Jr., Chicago, Ill./Mother McAuley HS) also returns on defense, after compiling 104 digs (1.39 per game) last season. Complete Augsburg preview can be found at: http://www.augsburg.edu/athletics/volleyball/0607preview.html

Bethel University		
Head Coach:	Gretchen Hunt (6th season / 93-68 overall)	
2005 Record:	17-12 (5-6 MIAC / Tied 5th)	

Key Returners:	Liz Glesne (Jr., OH, 5-11, All-MIAC) Amy Anderson (Jr., OH, 5-8) Kayla Smith (Jr., L, 5-6) Jennifer Stoa (So., MB, 5-10) Laura Naig (Jr., S., 5-6)
Season Preview:	After returning to the MIAC Playoffs and finishing the season ranked 8th in the Central Region in 2005, the Royals are looking to continue their climb back into the elite teams of the MIAC. After three consecutive years of Top 25 rankings in 2001, 2002, and 2003, the Royals were disappointed in 2004 with a 10-20 finish. Behind the play of two big-hitting sophomores and a solid senior class, Bethel returned to their winning ways last season and will be looking for more in 2006. Liz Glesne (Underwood, Minn.) and Amy Anderson (Alexandria , Minn.) led the way from the outside hitter position tallying 481 kills and 312 kills respectively. Anderson moved into a starting role and was 2nd in kills, attempts and hitting percentage, earning the Most Improved Player award from her teammates at the end of the season. Glesne was one of two sophomores selected to the MIAC All-Conference team, and finished the year ranked 8th in the NCAA in kills per game with an average of 4.62. Glesne was selected to All-Tournament teams at both the Northwestern and Hamline tournaments. Defense is another area the Royals anticipate both depth and strong play. Kayla Smith (Lakeville, Minn.) and Angie Nies (Alexandria, Minn.) are the top two returning defensive players. Finishing 2nd and 3rd on the team in digs with 312 and 306, they will anchor the Royal's defense that suffered a big loss with the graduation of MIAC Defensive Player of the Year and Bethel 's all-time digs per game leader, Kimmie Moehring (Minnetonka, Minn.). At the setter position, there will be big shoes to fill with the graduation of four-year starter and All-MIAC and All-Central Region honorable mention selection, Katie Snyder (Alexandria, Minn.). Finishing 2nd in the MIAC and 17th in the nation in assists per game, Snyder led one of the most efficient offenses in Bethel's recent history. However, the Royals have the luxury of two top setters waiting in the wings; Laura Naig (Kasson, Minn.) was a First-team All-State selection coming out of high school, leading her team twice to the State Tournament, where in 2003 she played a Mayer Lutheran team lead by setter Pam Feltmann (Norwood-Young America, Minn.), the other returning setter on the Royals' roster. Feltmann might also be used at opposite hitter because of her versatility. While likely the biggest question mark for the Royals entering the season, preseason practices have been encouraging at the middle blocker position. The top returner is Jennifer Stoa (Brooklyn Park , Minn.) who earned a starting position as a freshman and tallied 156 kills and 62 blocks in her inaugural season. Vying for the second starting position will be juniors Alissa Martin (Williams Bay , Wis.), Lauren Darrell (Woodbury, Minn.), and senior utility player Nikki Murphy (Irondale, Minn.). Complete Bethel preview can be found at: http://cas.bethel.edu/athletics/Volleyball/2006/preview.html

Carleton College		
Head Coach:	Heidi Luehmann Jaynes (8th season / 107-81 overall)	
2005 Record:	22-5 (10-1 MIAC / 2nd)	
Key Returners:	Danielle Hargreaves (Sr./OH/Brandon, Manitoba/Vincent Massey) Heather LaChapelle (Jr./S/Eagan, Minn.) Vanessa Brown (Sr./Lakeville, Minn.) Sarah Kunelius (So./Eagan, Minn.) Libby Ritz (Jr./Madison, Wis./West)	

Season Preview:	Expectations is a concept that hasn't usually been associated with the Carleton College volleyball team, but that's exactly what awaits head coach Heidi Jaynes and her charges as the Knights enter the 2006 season. The Knights have celebrated their first MIAC regular-season title (2004) and first NCAA Tournament bid (2005) in two decades and find themselves ranked 13th in the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) Division III top 25 pre-season poll. Jaynes said there are a good side and bad side to the heightened expectations, although she feels her team's recent successes should breed more of the same. "It drives you in practice and in games to think about getting back to where we've been the past two seasons. The fact that we've reached our goals before – we have a [MIAC championship] banner on the wall and have been in the NCAA Tournament – it just makes the players hungrier and gives them the confidence they can do it," she said. "I think confidence and the mental part of the game can take you much farther than your skills alone can take you. That can be a real advantage for our team." These high expectations are fueled by the return of five starters and eight players who saw regular action in 2005. Highlighting the returnees is senior Danielle Hargreaves (Brandon, Manitoba/Vincent Massey Collegiate), who paced the Knights with 3.25 kills per game last season in earning All-MIAC honors. She ranked second on the team with 4.10 digs per game and first in points per game at 3.88. Heather La Chapelle (Eagan, Minn.), in her third season as Carleton's starting setter, amassed 9.74 assists per game a year ago and enters the season with a career assists average of 10.07 per game. She'll be aided by the return of classmate Rachel Popielarz (Pacific Palisades, Calif./Marlborough), who posted a career-best 4.28 assists per game last year, including a career-high 27 assists in the NCAA Tournament win over Concordia College, Moorhead. Vanessa Brown (Sr./Lakeville, Minn.) and Sarah Kunelius (So./Eagan, Minn.) are the other two returning starters and will be joined by Libby Ritz (Jr./Madison, Wis./West) as another key returnee. Brown, in her first year as a starter, blossomed with a 1.97 kills per game average and hit .244, second best on the team. She also ranked third on the club with 0.58 blocks per game. Kunelius was named to the MIAC Playoffs all-tournament team and averaged 2.27 kills per game and 0.70 blocks per game, ranking her fourth and second, respectively, on the squad. Ritz, meanwhile, posted a breakout sophomore campaign with 1.23 kills and 0.55 blocks per game. The Knights will need Ritz and others to step forward in the middle with the loss of All-MIAC and all-region middle hitter Alivia Bryan '06 to graduation. Newcomer Annie Eckhoff (Northfield, Minn.) presents Jaynes with an intriguing middle hitter option, as her athleticism and length could present problems for the opposition. The other big losses to graduation came at the libero and outside hitter positions. Jamie Lykken '06, a two-time All-MIAC first team pick and all-region selection last season, is gone after setting the school record with 5.96 digs per game last year. Jaynes will look for a combination of senior Kelsey Holmes (Brownsburg, Ind.) and rookie Laura Barsness (Lakeville, Minn./Lakeville North) to step in and fill that void, though both players will likely see action defensively, one at the libero and the other as a reserve. Complete Carleton preview found at: http://apps.carleton.edu/athletics/?sport=267&module=content&id=233609
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<u>Concordia College</u>		
Head Coach:	Tim Mosser (14th season / 244-168 overall)	
2005 Record:	21-5 (8-3 MIAC / 4th)	
Key Returners:	Becca Shane 2004 All-American, 2005 MIAC All-Conference Michelle Honek 2nd on the team in total attacks and digs in '05 Jill Hance Led the team in assists (555) in '05 Anna Walden Led the team in digs (361) in '05 Alyssa Dahl 2nd on the team in assists (447) in '05	

Season Preview:	The 2006 Concordia volleyball team is poised to continue the tradition of excellence that has been established by head coach Tim Mosser in the past three seasons. During that time the Cobbers have been ranked in the top 25 in the nation for 23 consecutive weeks and have made the NCAA Tournament for three straight seasons. Along the way, Concordia has accumulated two MIAC Tournament championships and compiled an impressive 25-8 record in conference play. However, Mosser knows that all those accomplishments are in the past and won't help his 2006 team steer through the tough MIAC schedule. Heading into the season, the Cobbers are ranked No.11 in the AVCA Division III Preseason Poll. Concordia is also picked by the conference coaches as "the team to beat," receiving a league-best six first-place votes in the annual preseason poll. All that adulation is well and good, but Mosser realizes that when Concordia opens its conference schedule against defending champion St. Thomas on Sept. 13, everything will be set aside and this year's team will have to stand on its own. The Cobbers are well equipped to handle the big red target that they will wear throughout the season. They return five of the starting six players who went 8-3 in the MIAC last year, won the prestigious Minnesota/Iowa Border Battle Tournament and earned a bid into the NCAA playoffs. They also possess one of the most dangerous players in the league in All-American middle hitter Becca Shane (Sr., Detroit Lakes, Minn.). Shane has 1,095 kills entering her senior year and needs 444 to break the program record for kills in a career. She was third in kills in the MIAC last year and led the league in blocks and points. Her presence in the middle helped Concordia, as a team, lead the league in blocks last year. She is in the top five in school history in solo blocks, block assists and total blocks. If she is able to have the best season to date, she will make the Cobbers a tough team to beat on any night. Shane is not alone when it comes to front-line power. Junior Michelle Honek (Staples, Minn./Staples-Motley HS) gives the Cobbers a force on the outside. Honek is coming off a sophomore season where she finished second on the team in total attacks. Defensively, her athletic ability allows her to defend a huge chunk of the court. She was second on the team in digs (350). Joining Shane and Honek up front will be senior Lindsay Sipma (Dickinson, N.D.). The right-side hitter led Concordia in attack percentage (.275) last year and finished third in the MIAC in that statistical category. She has steadily improved her kill totals the past two seasons and if she can continue that trend, she will give the Cobbers a formidable front-line capable of playing at the national level. The backcourt cupboard is not bare either. Concordia will return a pair of sophomore setters and a senior defensive specialist. Jill Hance (Hopkins, Minn./Benilde-St.Margaret's) and Alyssa Dahl (Willmar, Minn.) had points in the season last year where they were able to take control of the offense and guide the Cobbers to an 11-match winning streak in the middle of the year. Hance led the team in assists with 555 and was named the MVP of the Haverford (Pa.) Tournament. Dahl gelled at the end of the year, finishing with 447 and being honored with the MIAC Player of the Week for the week of Oct. 17. Anna Walden (Sr., Hawley, Minn.) anchored the Cobber defense as the team's defensive specialist. She led the team in digs with 361. She will also be helped by the year of experience in the spotlight. Complete Cobber preview can be found at: http://www.cord.edu/dept/sports/fall/vb/06preview.php
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Gustavus Adolphus College		
Head Coach:	Kari Eckheart (10th season/ 133-144 overall)	
2005 Record:	14-11 (5-6 MIAC / Tied 5th)	
Key Returners:	Andrea Kron (Jr., OH, Cold Spring Minn.) Leading returning hitter with 324 kills Becca Thompson (Sr., MB, Mankato, Minn.) Leading returning blocker with 85 total blocks Rachelle Jakobs (Sr., S, Montevideo, Minn.) Led team in assists with 625	

Season Preview:	The 2006 Gustavus volleyball team returns five starters and seven letterwinners from a squad that posted a 14-11 mark and finished in a tie for fifth place in the MIAC last fall. Coach Kari Eckheart is excited about the potential of this year's squad with the nucleus of the group returning after gaining valuable experience in 2005. The team missed the MIAC Playoffs as a result of a tiebreaker and Eckheart feels like this group can make a strong run at returning to post-season play. Junior Andrea Kron (Cold Spring, Minn.), the team's primary hitter, will key the attack. Kron led the squad in kills last year with 324. She ranks 13th on the all-time kill list with 614 after just two seasons of play. Junior rightside hitter Jennifer Thelemann (LeSueur, Minn.) also returns after recording 242 kills and 78 total blocks last season. Thelemann will likely move inside and become a middle hitter this season. Filling out the veteran front line for the Gusties will be senior middle blocker Becca Thompson (Mankato, Minn.) and junior outside hitter Jessica Plemel (Owatonna, Minn.). Thompson totaled 85 blocks and 232 kills last year, while Plemel contributed 210 kills and 399 digs. In the back row, Gustavus will be led by senior setter Rachelle Jakobs (Montevideo, Minn.), junior setter and defensive specialist Bridget Burtzel (Cold Spring, Minn.), and sophomore libero Emily Klein (Red Wing, Minn.). Jakobs led the team in set assists last year with 625. She also contributed 195 digs and 23 service aces. Burtzel alternated at setter with Jakobs and recorded 423 set assists. She also contributed 283 digs. Klein made an immediate contribution in her rookie season as she led the team in digs with 419. Newcomers expected to contribute to the squad this year according to Coach Eckheart are middle blockers Danielle Gimmestad (Fy., Marshall, Minn.) and Meghan Gehring (Fy., Eau Claire, Wis.) and defensive specialist Jessi Weber (Fy., Osceola, Wis.).
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Hamline University	
Head Coach:	Gina Rollie (4th season / 36-46 overall)
2005 Record:	13-15 (4-7 MIAC / Tied 8th)
Key Returners:	Dana Luiken (Sr./MB/6-0/Chatfield, Minn./Chosen Valley) Angie Asmus (Jr./S/5-9/Plymouth, Minn./Wayzata) Jenna Witt (Sr./DS,L/5-6/Champlin, Minn. /Champlin Park) Shelby Hyllengren (Jr./OH/5-9/Cannon Falls, Minn.)

Season Preview:	In head coach Gina Rollie's last two seasons, the Hamline volleyball team has graduated a combined one senior. The Pipers will triple that total in the 2006 campaign, giving the squad the veteran leadership needed to compete for the spot in the MIAC Playoffs. "The expectation is to be competing for a playoff spot," Rollie said of her team that went 13-15 a season ago, 4-7 in conference play. "We need to stay healthy and have solid seasons from our veterans, but I think we have a legitimate shot at the playoffs." The Pipers have earned their stripes over the last two seasons. They've learned how to win the close match as demonstrated by their 9-1 record in five-game matches in 2004 and 2005. They posted a 3-0 record in five-game matches in conference play last season en route to putting up the most wins in conference play by a Piper volleyball team since 1999. The Pipers will continue to utilize the three-middle offense to get the best athletes out on the court. "I think this year will determine if the three-middle is a valuable offense for us to run," Rollie said. "I think it served our needs well last year, and we have the exact same personnel, so we should be able to run it more efficiently this year. Dana (Luiken) is a big key to that. The offense is built around her." Luiken (Chatfield, Minn.), a 6-0 middle blocker, enters her fourth season as a starter in the front row. Last year, she posted 336 kills and 88 blocks – good for second on the team in both categories. With 181 kills this season, she will become just the sixth player in Hamline volleyball history to amass 1,000 career kills. She will be joined by a talented group of hitters as the Pipers return five players who recorded more than 100 kills in the season. Adding to the offensive punch is junior Shelby Hyllengren (Cannon Falls, Minn.). The outside hitter had 352 kills last season to lead the team. Senior Christina Rossetter (Two Harbors, Minn.) and sophomores Amanda Booth (Champlin, Minn.) and Emily Amici (Whitewater, Wis.) all made valuable contributions a season ago while first-years Tasha Simmons (Eagan, Minn.) and Aubrey Hendry (Isle, Minn.) will fight for playing time in 2006. Running the offense will be setter Angie Asmus (Plymouth, Minn.). The junior was named All-MIAC first team after breaking a school record with 1,025 assists in 2005. She also added 49 service aces and 55 blocks. Sophomore Jenni Nichols (Rockford, Minn.) will compete for playing time at the position. The back row is also a veteran group with senior libero Jenna Witt (Champlin, Minn.) leading the way. Witt is fourth on Hamline's all-time digs list with 1,428. She is joined by juniors Tina Cherland (New Brighton, Minn.) and Sara Burns (LeSueur, Minn.), sophomore Alex Askew (Wadena, Minn.), and first-year Jenny Burns (LeSueur, Minn.). Complete Hamline preview found at: http://www.hamline.edu/hamline_info/athletics/volleyball/2006/outlook.html
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Macalester College		
Head Coach:	Steph Schleuder (9th season / 119-108 overall)	
2005 Record:	11-17 (4-7 MIAC / Tied 8th)	
Key Returners:	Lauren Eberhart (Jr., OH / Madelia, Minn.) All-MIAC Sonia Muzikarova (So., MH / Bratislava, Slovakia) MIAC Newcomer of the Year, Central Region Freshman of the Year Kari Tanaka (Jr., S / Bloomington, Minn. / Jefferson)	

Season Preview:	Mac returns most of its key players and is looking to move up among the MIAC's top teams in '06. Led by All-MIAC outside hitter Lauren Eberhart (Sr., Madelia, Minn.), the Scots have a chance to be one of the better teams at the net in the conference. Eberhart ranked fifth in the MIAC in kills per game and points per game and passed the 1,000 career kill mark as a junior while slamming 3.8 kills per game on the season. As a sophomore she ranked second in the league in kills. Eberhart will be joined up front from MIAC and Central Region Freshman of the Year Sonia Muzikarova (So., Bratislava, Slovakia / Gymnazium Bilikova), who ranked second in the league with a .327 hitting percentage. Muzikarova, who will be moving from middle to outside hitter, finished the season on a high notes, spiking 32 kills in a win over Bethel (the most posted by anyone in an MIAC match last year) and on the year led team with 38 serving aces. Andrea Hansen (Sr., Andover, Minn. / Anoka) missed over half the season with a broken foot but before that was one of the top blockers in the league. She'll join Eberhart and Muzikarova to help give Mac a force at the net. Other key front row returners are Stephanie Nelson (Sr., St. Paul, Minn. / Highland Park) and Kate Fahje (Jr., Waukesha, Wis. / South). Setter Kari Tanaka (Jr., Bloomington, Minn. / Jefferson) averaged 7.9 assists per game last year. Complete Macalester preview found at: http://www.macalester.edu/athletics/volleyball/news/06_season_outlook.html
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College of Saint Benedict		
Head Coach:	Michelle Swanson-Blaeser (7th season / 96-72 overall)	
2005 Record:	23-6 (9-2 MIAC / 3rd)	
Key Returners:	Teri Knapper (Sr. / MB / 5-11 / Renville, Minn. / Renville County West) Laura Zwach (Sr. / Libero / 5-2 / Walnut Grove, Minn. / Tracy Area) Emily Stessman (Jr. / OH / 5-11 / Omaha, Neb. / Marian) Nicole Hjelmgren (So. / MB / 5-11 / Maplewood, Minn. / North St. Paul)	

Season Preview:	The 2006 season will be one in which the Blazer volleyball team hopes to build on an impressive showing in 2005 in which they finished with a 23-6 overall record and a 9-2 MIAC mark. Saint Benedict will be seeking another strong season by sustaining their team's definition as a nationally ranked competitor with athletes who work together to achieve goals. CSB, who graduated three senior captains will be led by another trio of seniors in 2006. All-American Second Team honoree Teri Knapper along with fellow captains Laura Zwach and Alicia Reif will have the responsibility of making sure the Blazers will be ready for another successful run this fall. The combination of Knapper and junior outside hitter Emily Stessman leading the front court attack will be one of the best in the MIAC conference. Knapper (3.42 kills/game) and Stessman (3.25 kills/game) finished first and third respectively in kills on the Blazer volleyball team. Sophomore Nicole Hjelmgren will also provide some experience in the front court after finishing fifth on the team in kills with 148. The defensive side of the ball has not been a problem for a long time for the Blazer volleyball team, which can be seen in efforts of Zwach, who enters her fourth year as CSB's libero. Zwach, who posted 594 digs (third overall in the MIAC) will once again have the responsibility of being the anchor to the Blazer defense this fall and is expected to have yet another quality showing. Fellow captain Alicia Reif will be providing the defense with a veteran's presence with strong leadership capable of defining not only CSB defense, but the entire team as well. Team blocking will be another area in which the Blazers appear to have an advantage. Hjelmgren (135 blocks/1.27 blocks per game) and Knapper (121 blocks/1.13 blocks per game) were second and fifth respectively in the MIAC in the blocking category. Overall the Blazers, as a team, were second in the MIAC in blocking with an average of 2.84 blocks per game. CSB will welcome a strong group of first-year athletes they hope make an immediate impact at several positions on the court. Beth Hanson, Emma Jaynes, Andrea Millerbernd, Jessica Olsem, Anna Philp, Kristal Sawatzke, Katie Schlangen and Andria Welsh will all be contending for a variety of positions on the court left vacant from three graduated seniors. Saint Benedict volleyball has established a reputation and team definition of playing with pride and exhibiting a strong work ethic by playing with determination on the court. The team will need to continue to perform at the top of their game in 2006 in order to sustain their team's definition.
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<u>College of St. Catherine</u>		
Head Coach:	Nicole Hess (4th season / 9-71 overall)	
2005 Record:	3-24 (0-11 MIAC / 12th)	
Key Returners:	Whitney Sparby (So, Red Wing, Minn.) Erika Kriechbaum (So, Faribault, Minn.) Bridget Holman (Sr, Springfield, Minn.) Emily Van Hon (Jr., Fairfax, Minn.) Nicole Haase (Sr., Betha, Minn.)	

Season Preview:	There is a buzz surrounding the St. Kate's volleyball team. Nicole Hess enters her fourth season as the head coach of the program and is optimistic about the upcoming 2006 campaign. "We have a solid group of returning players and are adding some exciting new faces who will add both offensive and defensive talent," stated Hess. Last year the team relied heavily on Whitney Sparby (So, Red Wing, Minn.) to direct the Wildcat offense. Sparby is a strong team leader who was voted as one of the three captains for the 2006 season. Both Erika Kriechbaum (So, Faribault, Minn.) and Bridget Holman (Sr, Springfield, Minn.) will join Sparby as captains this season. Kriechbaum had a great 2005 season (446 digs) and will be relied on to give stability to the Wildcats' defensive efforts. Holman will bring defense and a lot of spirit to the team this season. The Wildcats will also look to veterans Emily Van Hon (Jr., Fairfax, Minn.) and Nicole Haase (Sr., Betha, Minn.). Van Hon led the team in kills last season with a total of 262. She is a reliable player who contributes night in and night out. Haase brings a lot of stability to the Wildcat offense and will be a big key this season. There are six new faces on this season's edition of the Wildcats. The coaching staff is thrilled to welcome All-State middle hitter Maria Hoffman (FY, Montgomery, Minn.), Lana Brand (FY, Faribault, Minn.), and Lauren Brin (FY, Oakdale, Minn.). Hoffman tallied over 500 kills during the 2005 season and was one of three finalists for Miss Volleyball in the state of Minnesota. Brand helped lead her team to the 2005 Class A Volleyball Championship. She is a dynamic hitter who will team with Hoffman to give the Wildcats a much more complex offense. Brin will bring speed and depth to the setter position and will join Sparby in running the 2006 offense. Things are looking up for the Wildcats this season. With the strong core of returning players and the experienced newcomers this year's team should prove to be one that will battle with opponents night in and night out. Complete St. Catherine preview can be found at: http://minerva.stkate.edu/athletics.nsf/pages/vb_pre06
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Saint Mary's University		
Head Coach:	Mike Lester (10th season / 149-107 overall)	
2005 Record:	10-19 (3-8 MIAC / 10th)	
Key Returners:	Carolyn Kiefer (New London, Wis.) Theresa Perrini (Fairway, Kan.) Molli Dant (Forest City, Iowa)	

Season Preview:	A year ago, Saint Mary's University volleyball coach had one concern — who was going to replace three-year starter Tessa Stranik as the team's setter? Seven hundred fifty-four assists later, Lester had his answer: Carolyn Kiefer (New London, Wis.). As the 2006 season draws near, Lester once again has a glaring, unanswered question: How to replace 568 kills, 119 aces, 977 digs, and 241 blocks — numbers put up by members of the Cardinals' graduated senior class? "We lost quite a bit — a lot of integral parts of this team for the last several years — there's no question about that," said Lester, who graduated six seniors — including starters Lisa Engdahl, Desiree Larson, Beth Schubert and Amy Benz. "But we've also got a number of young players — Theresa Perrini (Fairway, Kan.), Carolyn Kiefer, Molli Dant (Forest City, Iowa) ... — who were significant contributors last year and come into this year with so much valuable playing experience. "Our lineup is going to have a completely new look this year, but I think we have the personnel to make some real strides in the conference race." A race the Cardinals never got out the starting blocks for a year ago. Not that Lester would remember — he's already erased SMU's 3-8 conference showing from his memory bank. And so have the Cardinals. "We made it clear during spring practice that last year was over and we weren't going to dwell on it," said Lester, whose team missed the conference's post-season tournament for the first time in the tournament's history. "Not making the MIAC Tournament last year was disappointing and getting back into that field is definitely a goal for this group. "Hopefully everyone used what happened last year as motivation over the summer, but once we took the court for our first practice, everyone's focus was on this year." Just how do the Cardinals get back on the MIAC's post-season mailing list? Teamwork. "This team reminds me a bit of the team we had in 2000," said Lester, who coached SMU to its first-ever NCAA regional tournament appearance in 2000. "We didn't really have a go-to person back then, and we don't have one this year. Diane Wood was our offensive leader (in 2000), but we also had four hitters with 300 kills — and I think we have some of that same balance this year, and I wouldn't be surprised if we had another season with four, 300-kill performers. "Teams aren't going to be able to key on one player to shut us down," continued Lester. "We've got a lot of very good athletes, which will allow us to be very flexible in what we do. "I think we're going to surprise a lot of teams this year, and that's exciting." Complete Saint Mary's preview can be found at: http://sports.smumn.edu/volleyball/2006/newsletter/vbpreview.html
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St. Olaf College		
Head Coaches:	Traci Cook (4th season / 61-62 overall) Cindy Book (25th season / 576-263 overall)	
2005 Record:	14-12 (5-6 MIAC / Tied 5th)	
Key Returners:	Audrey Volstad (Sr./Hanley Falls, Minn./Yellow Medicine East) Andrea Otteman (Sr./Ames, Iowa) Jess Levin (So./Cedar Rapids, Iowa/Xavier) Chris Brook (So./Centennial, Colo./Cherry Creek)	

Season Preview:	The 2006 version of the St. Olaf College Volleyball team hopes it can bring the best of 2005 forward, and leave the rest behind. Among the best back are four starters in the lineup including a pair of All-MIAC honorees in outside hitter Andrea Otteman (Sr., Ames, Iowa) and setter Audrey Volstad (Sr., Hanley Falls, Minn./Yellow Medicine East). Otteman, a first-time all-league pick last season, surpassed 1,000 career kills midway through the 2005 campaign. A two-time all-conference pick, Volstad topped the league and was 21st in the nation in set assists. Jess Levin (So., Cedar Rapids, Iowa/Xavier) emerged as a threat in the middle as 2005 progressed. Levin and Chris Brook (So., Centennial, Colo./Cherry Creek) will solidify the middle. A group of first years will break in this fall. Outside hitter Paige Olson (Brainerd, Minn.), left Janet Sully (New Brighton, Minn./Irondale) and libero Alyssa Williams (Northfield, Minn.) will likely see substantial time early. St. Olaf has also welcomed newcomers Rachel Kovala (Vadnais Heights, Minn./White Bear Lake), Kari Grimes (Inver Grove Heights, Minn./Simley) and Mali Schneiter (Waupaca, Wis.). The team can also lean on their fifth-place finish in the MIAC, marking St. Olaf's first postseason appearance in three seasons. The Oles then made a charge, defeating No. 12 Concordia College-Moorhead in a three-game road win in the first round. The following semifinal loss to league champion St. Thomas and a slew of five-game losses during the regular season are setbacks St. Olaf would like to leave out of their 2006 story. Three of the Oles' six losses came in five games. In two of those matches, St. Olaf had match point on more than one occasion. The Oles open on Sept. 1 at the Pikes' Peak Invite in Colorado Springs, Colo. The following weekend they host the St. Olaf Invitational. Conference play begins on Sept. 13 at Macalester. Complete St. Olaf preview found at: http://fusion.stolaf.edu/athletics//index.cfm?fuseaction=NewsDetails&id=938
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University of St. Thomas		
Head Coach:	Thanh Pham (4th season / 74-27 overall)	
2005 Record:	30-7 (11-0 MIAC / 1st)	
Key Returners:	Rachelle Dosch (Sr, OH, 5-7) All-MIAC; 3X Starter: Career: 1,163 kills, 1,274 digs in 343 career games Sarah Rainey (Sr, S, 5-8) Last two seasons: 241 games with 2,048 assists, 564 aces and 361 digs Kristin Storrs (Jr., OH, 6-1) 2005: 373 kills, 95 blocks Molly Conway (So., S, 5-7) 2005: 115 GM, 561 assists, 149 digs Katie Kramer (So., DS, 5-4) 2005: 98 GM, 511 digs, 22 aces Katie McCaffrey (So., MB, 6-0) 2005: 109 GM, 113 kills, 87 blocks	

Season Preview:	St. Thomas volleyball had a breakthrough season in 2005 as it reached the NCAA playoffs for the first time since 1992. The Tommies went 4-0 in the postseason before losing a hard-fought three-game decision to national power Washington (Mo.) (35-2) in the regional final. Coach Thanh Pham saw his 2005 team go 15-0 vs. conference opponents en route to a 30-7 overall mark. It was just the second 30-win season in school history and seventh consecutive 20-win campaign. In the last six seasons, St. Thomas teams have compiled a 168-64 record, with four MIAC regular-season championships. UST graduated two key players -- All-American and conference Player of the Year Erika Wetzel, and middle blocker Ann Eibensteiner -- yet the Tommies will again look to challenge for the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) championship. Pham returns four starters and one libero among 16 letterwinners, including some off the junior-varsity team that won the conference. St. Thomas was picked to finish second in the MIAC preseason poll but is ranked 10th in the AVCA preseason top-25 poll. Leading the 2006 Tommies will be senior co-captains Rachelle Dosch, Sarah Rainey and Hannah Meium. UST is 74-27 in their era. Dosch made All-MIAC, All-Region and honorable mention All-America in 2005. A three-year starter, Dosch has 1,163 kills and 1,274 digs in 343 career games. In two varsity seasons, Rainey has played in 241 games with 2,048 assists, 564 aces and 361 digs. She tied a school record in 2005 for games played with 134. Meium was chosen the team's 2005 Most Improved Player. She had 132 kills, 19 digs and 37 blocks while playing in 35 of 37 matches. Pham returns a strong sophomore class led by defensive specialist Katie Kremer, named the team's Freshman of the Year in 2005, and setter Molly Conway. In 36 matches, Kremer had 511 digs and 22 service aces. Junior Kristin Storrs (6-1), senior Jada Lewis (5-9), and sophomores Katie McCaffrey (6-0), Kelly Horazdovsky, Jenna Pont (5-10) and Dee Prioleau (6-1) add depth at the net. Junior Aly McConnell adds depth at libero. Complete St. Thomas preview found at: http://www.stthomas.edu/tommies/shared/shownews.cfm?ArticleID=4389
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2005 - [Standings](#), [Results](#), [Awards](#), [Final Stats](#), [Season Preview](#)

2004 - [Standings](#), [Results](#), [Awards](#), [Final Stats](#), [Season Preview](#)

2003 - [Standings](#), [Results](#), [Awards](#), [Final Stats](#), [Season Preview](#), [Preseason Poll](#)

2002 - [Standings](#), [Results](#), [Awards](#), [Final Stats](#), [Players of the Week](#), [Season Preview](#)

2001 - [Standings](#), [Results](#), [Awards](#), [Final Stats](#), [Players of the Week](#), [Season Preview](#)