

2008 MIAC Women's Soccer Season Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. -- The 2008 MIAC women's soccer season may have an ending result similar to that of 2007. In the MIAC Preseason Coaches Poll, defending MIAC champion Concordia lands at the top once again followed closely by Saint Benedict with Macalester rounding off the top three.



Concordia comes into the 2008 season looking to reclaim the crown after winning the MIAC regular season and playoff game the last two years. To many, they will be the team to beat as they return eight starters, including two of their top three scorers, and a three-year starting goalie. Saint Benedict can not be overlooked with a veteran team that returns all 11 starters and 20 letter winners. Senior Tina Lisk will lead a veteran corps of scorers with senior defender Erin Flynn (2007 Co-MVP, All-MIAC and All-Central Region) looking to make several stops.

This year's veteran Macalester squad is optimistic about making a run for a MIAC crown under Head Coach John Leaney. MIAC Player of the Year and All-America forward Grace King will lead the scoring attack. Carleton crafted an impressive run of nine consecutive wins late in the season and finished fifth in the conference, narrowly missing the MIAC playoffs in 2007. This year they will look to improve upon that late run in the conference and regional standings.

Augsburg will make a quest for their first MIAC women's soccer championship in 2008. The Auggies returns 12 letter winners, including seven starters who shut out seven opponents in conference play -- tied for the conference lead in that category. St. Thomas is looking to continue their climb toward the top of the conference in 2008. With 11 returnees and 11 newcomers, they hope to position themselves to be in the four-team MIAC playoffs this season.

Despite another tough schedule St. Olaf will look to a young, but talented roster to make a climb up the rankings in the MIAC. Christina Mills, the Oles' lone all-conference selection in 2007, will anchor the defensive unit. Hamline enters the 2008 campaign coming off their most successful season in program history under first year head coach Ted Zingman. Junior transfer Haley Leverington, who joins the Pipers from Winona, has an impressive shot that should allow her to contribute immediately in the center/mid position. State

Gustavus has eight returning starters and 22 letter winners, which they hope will improve their record from last season. Defensively, the Gusties return three of four starters including defenders Rachel Iblings, Alison Dittmer, and Megan Gode. Saint Mary's will be led by new head coach Eric Zimmerman who transitioned from assistant coach in 2007. Zimmerman is hoping his talented team can take a giant step forward again this year and improve upon their 10-7-1 record from last season.

Bethel's strong senior class, skill and leadership will be the cornerstones of a team that head coach Pepe Jon Chavez believes will be a playoff contender this season. Charli Sorensen comes back for her senior year and only needs 80 saves to set the career mark for saves at Bethel. Entering the 2008 season, St. Kate's soccer coach Steve Bellis returns almost every one of his starters. He will need to find stability between a strong and experienced defense with a new goal keeper and a young and speedy offense.

2008 MIAC Preseason Coaches Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (1 for first, 2 for second, etc.) Teams are ranked in order of lowest point total to highest with first place votes shown in parentheses.

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

2008 MIAC Playoff Dates: Semifinals (Wednesday, November 5), Finals (Saturday, November 8)

Augsburg

Coach: Mike Navarre

Career Record: 75-68-18 (10 seasons)

2007 Finish: Tied 4th/(7-3-1 MIAC, 9-7-3 overall)

Augsburg Season Preview

The quest for Augsburg's first MIAC women's soccer championship has begun. Augsburg has qualified for the MIAC's postseason playoffs for the last four years, but has yet to win it all.

Since the four-team MIAC postseason playoffs were started in 2003, the field has been dominated by three teams. Macalester and Concordia-Moorhead have qualified for all five playoff tournaments, while Augsburg has reached the playoffs each of the past four seasons.

Reaching that level of consistency in the MIAC has been a long-term process for head coach Mike Navarre, entering his 10th season as Augsburg's mentor. And this season should be no different in terms of consistency. Augsburg returns 12 letterwinners, including seven starters, to a team coming off a 9-7-3 overall finish and 7-3-1 mark in MIAC play in 2007.

"Making the playoffs and winning the MIAC are always our goals. It's challenging, but possible," Navarre said. "We have created a culture of success that our incoming players begin to understand quickly, and our seniors take personally."

A hallmark of Navarre's Augsburg clubs has been strong defense. Last season, Augsburg surrendered just 16 goals, a total tied for third-lowest in the MIAC in overall play, and its six goals allowed in 11 league games was second-lowest. The Auggies shut out seven opponents in conference play -- tied for the conference lead in that category.

Goalkeeper Maggie DeGroot (SR, Waukesha, Wis./Waukesha West HS), a veteran who will close her career as perhaps the top goalkeeper in school history, enters her senior campaign tied for the school's career record with 26 shutouts, while holding career marks for goals-against-average (0.71) and win-loss percentage (.611). Her 27 career wins are just eight away from the school record of 35.

Three of the four defensive starters return, anchored by two-time All-MIAC honorable-mention selection Felicia Faison (SR, Minneapolis, Minn./South HS).

Up front, starting forwards Katie Medd (SR, Mankato, Minn./East HS) and Lacey Hoover (SO, Duluth, Minn./Central HS) return, after combining for eight goals and four assists last season. The biggest question mark will come in the midfield, where the Auggies lost three of the four starters last season to graduation. The lone starter returning is Kelsey Watsabaugh (SR, Eden Prairie, Minn./Hopkins HS), who led the Auggies with six goals and two assists for 14 points last year.

Complete season preview is online:

<http://www.augsburg.edu/athletics/wsoccer/0809preview.html>

Bethel

Coach: Pepe Jon Chavez

Career Record: 7-8-3 (1 season)

2007 Finish: 10th (2-6-3 MIAC, 7-8-3 overall)

Bethel Season Preview

In 2008, the Royals will have a strong senior class as they return Esther Sowles (Waconia, Minn.), who ranks among the top four scorers all-time at Bethel, All-MIAC honorable mention midfielder Kristin Kishaba (Eau Claire, Wis.), All-MIAC honorable mention goalkeeper Charli Sorensen (Park Ridge, Ill.), Nicki Luehrs (Hudson, Wis.), and Kylie Dirks (Excelsior, Minn.) on defense. Their skill and leadership will be the cornerstones of a team that head coach Pepe Jon Chavez believes will be a playoff contender this season.

OFFENSE

One of the biggest tasks the Royals face is replacing All-MIAC midfielder Jessie Tschetter, who graduated after a stellar senior year that saw her tie for the conference lead in overall points and tie for second in total goals scored. Chavez expects Sowles and Kristin Kishaba to fill the voids. "Based on what I've seen from both Esther and Kristin, I think the two of them will challenge our conference defenders," said Chavez. Also look for Luehrs, Breanna Posey (Jr., Champlin, Minn.), Katelynn Hains (Jr., Prior Lake, Minn.), and Kelsey Dewey (So., Buffalo, N.Y.) to find the back of the net for the Royals.

DEFENSE

The Royals only lose one starting defender from last season's team in Jane Stephens. Kylie Dirks and Kelci Schedler (Jr., Fond du Lac, Wis.), as well as Alicia Sedlock (So., Cambridge, Minn.), and incoming player's will make up the remainder of the Bethel defense as they do their best to contain the opposition and get the ball back up field. Chavez said, "Kylie and Kelci will anchor us out there with Kishaba, and we've got some good talent coming in to help us take scoring opportunities away from the other team."

GOALKEEPER

Charli Sorensen comes back for her senior year and only needs 80 saves to set the career mark for saves at Bethel. "I'd love to see Charli set the record for us. She's done such an amazing job for us. We also have two strong transfer students, Alyssa Riggs (UMD), and Sarah Byram (NDSU) coming in who could also see some time between the posts, and will push us strong into the future," said Chavez.

"This team has come a long way in the time that I've been here, and I really believe we're ready to take the next step and become a strong playoff contender," said Chavez.

Carleton

Coach: Keren Gudeman

Career Record: 25-10-3 (2 seasons)

2007 Finish: 5th/(7-4-0 MIAC, 13-5-0 overall)

Carleton Season Preview

Though half of the names on the roster will be new, 2008 is not a rebuilding year for the Carleton College Knights, who notched 13 wins last year, one shy of the school record. They crafted an impressive run of nine consecutive wins late in the season, finished fifth in the conference at 7-4-0, and narrowly missed the MIAC playoffs.

“Yes, we’re young, but I am excited by the combination of talented new players and solid experience on our team this season,” said Head Coach Keren Gudeman. “This is the fittest team I have coached at Carleton, and we are excited by our depth.”

As the Knights look to improve upon their conference and regional standing this year, they will need to fill the holes left by the seven graduated seniors, including All-Region and All-Conference midfielder Dylan Welch and All-Conference defender Megan Molteni.

Gudeman welcomes back 11 players from last season’s squad. Leading the way are a trio of returning all-conference honorees. Junior midfielder Mia Zutz (Middleton, Wis.) earned All-Region and All-Conference distinction in 2007 and was second on the team with five assists. Defenders Sophie Wood (Sr./Lake Bluff, Ill./Lake Forest) and Leigh-Anne Borkowski (So./Elverta, Calif./Center) were both All-MIAC honorable mention honors last season.

Carleton also returns its two leading scorers from 2007, veteran senior forwards Melley Turner (St. Paul, Minn./St. Paul Academy), who notched seven goals and six assists, and Nicky Bloom (Evanston, Ill./Evanston Township), who tallied five goals and one assist.

Joining Zutz at midfield are: juniors Emma Dobbins (Portland, Ore./Grant) and Merritt Swain (Mendota Heights, Minn./St. Paul Academy); and sophomores Elizabeth Arakaki (Seattle, Wash./Nathan Hale) and Megan Milligan (Las Cruces, N.M./Las Cruces). All four players will be counted on to provide leadership on the field again this season.

Senior goalkeeper Yusi He (South Pasadena, Calif.) and defenders Borkowski, Wood, and Greta Kringle (Jr./St. Paul, Minn./St. Paul Academy) return to form the corps of the Knights defense. Last season Carleton held its opponents to 0.83 goals per game—second in the MIAC—and recorded seven shutouts.

Along with 11 returning athletes, the Knights have new players in every position who will compete for starting spots and significant playing time.

“[The new players] have hit the ground running and will contribute immediately,” said Gudeman. “While they are new Carleton players, they are experienced club, ODP, and high school athletes who have played at a high level.”

Concordia

Coach: Dan Weiler
Career Record: 72-39-7 (6 seasons)

2007 Finish: 1st (9-1-1 MIAC, 16-4-1 overall)

Concordia Season Preview

Concordia, the two-time defending MIAC regular season and playoff champion, has set their sights on making a deeper run in the NCAA tournament this season. The Cobbers return eight starters from last year's championship team including two of their top three scorers and a three-year starting goalkeeper. Those facts alone have Dan Weiler optimistic as he enters his seventh season as the team's head coach.

The Cobbers surprised everyone in the conference last season after they backed up their 2006 titles with another pair of championships. The two spark plugs for the team in 2007 were freshmen forwards Sam Johnson (Fargo, N.D./Fargo North HS) and Susan Obermiller (Fargo, N.D./Fargo North HS). Obermiller led the team in total points last season with 28 and Johnson was tied for second on the squad with 27. The two combined for 20 of the team's 51 goals. Both players were named to the NSCAA All-Region Team last year. In 2007, Concordia led the MIAC in goals, shots taken, points and assists.

The Cobber defense has a pair of experienced players that have gone through the battles of the MIAC for three seasons. Goalkeeper Britt Reiersgord (Sr., Edina, Minn.) and central defender Chelsea McLaughlan (Sr., Blackfoot, Idaho) will give Concordia a steady influence and help CC retain their top conference defensive stature.

The midfield might hold the key for the Cobbers in 2008. Senior Maia Johnson (Northfield, Minn.) and sophomore Brittany Mayer (Bismarck, N.D./Bismarck Century HS) will be the frontrunners to hold down the center of the park. Mayer started 18 games last year and can adjust to any situation on the field. Fellow sophomore Abby Habein (Billings, Mont./Billings Senior HS) started 15 games at a wing midfielder and has shown flashes of being able to produce offensive fireworks from the wing.

Besides the midfield, the other key spot for Weiler to fill will be at wing defender. Last year Andi Purcell shut down every team's best attacker and earned All-Region and All-Conference honors. The presence of Reiersgord and McLaughlan will ease the transition period for the Concordia defense. Another plus will be the year of experience that central defender Erika Swenson (So., Fargo, N.D./Fargo North HS) and wing back Mikenna Maroney (Jr., Kalispell, Mont./Flathead HS) earned by starting the entire season.

If the Cobber regulars can stay healthy and the team can find a pair of players to fill the key spots in the lineup, Concordia should be in the mix for their third straight MIAC regular season and playoff title come November.

For more on Cobber women's soccer go to: www.cord.edu/dept/sports/fall/ws/index.php

Gustavus

Coach: Mike Stehlik

Career Record: 198-98-23 (18 seasons)

2007 Finish: 11th (3-8-0 MIAC, 8-10-0 overall)

Gustavus Season Preview

The Gustavus women’s soccer team posted an 8-10 mark with a young squad last season and Head Coach Mike Stehlik hopes that the experience gained a year ago will lead to more victories in 2008 . Stehlik will look to senior captains, Christy Tupy (Eagan, Minn.) and Ashley Voigtlander (Lino Lakes, Minn.), to lead the squad that includes eight returning starters and 22 letterwinners. Tupy, who started 17 games at forward, led the team in scoring with eight goals and one assist for 17 points, while Voigtlander, who started every game in the midfield, registered one goal and two assists for four points.

Defensively, the Gusties return three of four starters including defenders Rachel Iblings (Jr., Plymouth, Minn.), Alison Dittmer (Jr., Plymouth, Minn.), and Megan Gode (Jr., White Bear Lake, Minn.) along with goalkeeper Ashley Ohlson (Sr., Anchorage, Alaska). Iblings, a center back who anchors the defense, is a two-time honorable mention all-conference performer, while Gode and Dittmer started every game for the Gusties last season. Senior Jaime Tsurusaki (Sr., Apple Valley, Minn.) and Mackenzie Del Santro (So., Apple Valley, Minn.) both played regularly last season and will provide Coach Stehlik with solid depth in the back. In goal, the team will be led by Ohlson, who posted a record of 7-8-0 last season with a 1.68 goals against average. Sophomore Chelsea Bayer (Rogers, Minn.), who backed up Ohlson last season, compiled a record of 1-2-0 with a 0.89 goals against average.

In the midfield, three starters return including Voigtlander, Callie Christensen (Sr., Bloomington, Minn.), and Becca Hagen (Jr., Minneapolis, Minn.). Hagen, who tallied four goals for eight points last season, finished fourth on the team in scoring. Voigtlander contributed one goal and two assists for four points, and Christensen added one goal and one assist for three points. The Gusties also return sophomore Rhima Kharbush who played significant minutes last season.

On the attack, Coach Stehlik welcomes back returning scorer Christy Tupy. Tupy is a three-year regular, who has compiled 14 goals and 13 assists for 31 points in her career. Tupy will be joined up front by sophomore Ashley Anderson (Corcoran, Minn.) and junior Chelsea Craven (Sauk Rapids, Minn.). Anderson tallied three goals and two assists for eight points last season, while Craven contributed two goals for four points.

Hamline

Coch: Ted Zingman
Career Record: 10-8-0 (1 season)

2007 Finish: 8th (4-7-0 MIAC, 10-8-0 overall)

Hamline Season Preview

This year's team will be without two key players from that record-setting run. 2007 All-MIAC first team member Ann Donner (Stillwater, Minn.), Hamline's all-time leading points scorer (79), goals scorer (34), and second on the all-time list in career assists (11), graduated. Also graduating was 2007 All-MIAC honorable mention honoree Anna McMahon (Stillwater, Minn.), who holds the career assists title (16), and is second in all-time points scored (56) and goals scored (20).

On offense, team captain Kim Magill (Stillwater, Minn.) started all 18 games for Hamline last year, scoring three goals and two assists. A versatile player who is strong on both sides of the ball, the aggressive midfielder will look to score more points in her senior season to help fill the scoring hole left by the graduates.

Battling it out for the starting position in goal will be a trio of keepers, led by returning sophomore Katie Gardner (Minneapolis, Minn.). Gardner started seven games last season en route to a 4-7 record. She also led Hamline to three consecutive shutout wins to end the season, finishing with a shutout streak of 277 consecutive minutes. Hislop, a tall and athletic keeper, also brings in an impressive resume, earning all-conference and all-state honors in Montana in her senior season.

With a changing of the guard in the Piper scoring for 2008, the Pipers will be seeing a very different look on the field this season. Zingman “anticipates immediate contributions from the newcomers and is looking forward to the veteran players stepping into greater leadership roles.”

2007 Finish: Tied 3rd (7-3-1 MIAC, 10-6-1 overall)

Macalester Season Preview

Macalester’s string of four straight NCAA playoff appearances ended last year when the Scots finished at 10-6-1 overall and with a third-place 7-3-1 conference mark, but this year’s veteran Macalester squad is optimistic about making a run for an eighth MIAC crown since 1997 under Coach John Leaney. This will be one of Macalester’s most experienced teams ever.

MIAC Player of the Year and All-America forward Grace King (Sr., Northampton, Mass.) had a hand in two-thirds of her team’s scores last year, scoring 11 goals and assisting on nine others while netting a goal in six straight matches early in the campaign. King enters her senior year with 30 career goals and 19 assists, and the presence of her speed and skill makes the Scots a dangerous offensive team once again.

All-MIAC defender Liz Hormann (Sr., Salem, Ore. / South Salem) and goalkeeper Jenny Lee (Sr., Circle Pines, Minn. / Centennial) return to lead the Scots in the back. Lee goes into her senior year with a 0.66 career goals against average. Macalester was third in the league in goals allowed in ’07 and with its experience should be tough to score on once again. Maddie Mette (Jr., Burnsville, Minn.) is one of the MIAC’s best defenders.

There looks to be plenty of offensive talent to help keep the pressure off King, who will always be marked closely. The Scots have plenty of experience in the midfield and forward areas, including 2006 All-MIAC midfielder Anne Kintop (Sr., Minneapolis, Minn. / Southwest), who missed last season with injury. Rose Betzler (Jr., Northfield, Minn.) and Emily Hall (So., Seattle, Wash. / Roosevelt) have demonstrated scoring touch, while midfielders with scoring ability include Maddy Cochrane (Jr., Grand Marais, Minn. / Cook County), Grace Geiger (Jr., Seattle, Wash. / Bishop Blanchet), Maggie Yates (Jr., Spokane, Wash. / Lewis & Clark), Kelsey Speer (Jr., Madison, Wis. / West), Lauren Gutierrez (So., Hickory, N.C. / St. Stephen’s) and Martha Coe (So., Grand Haven, Mich.).

Since 1997, the Scots have claimed seven MIAC titles while going 101-7-13 in regular-season conference matches.

Saint Benedict

Coach: Kate McNeil
Career Record: 60-26-7 (5 seasons)

2007 Finish: 2nd (9-2-0 MIAC, 15-6-0 overall)

Saint Benedict Season Preview

The Blazers will rely on their defense and strong senior leadership to battle for the MIAC.

St. Catherine Season Preview

Entering the 2008 season, St. Kate’s soccer coach Steve Bellis returns almost every one of his starters from a team that he knows was “not far off” last year. In addition to winning five games and having some outstanding play last season, the Wildcats had three ties and lost five games by one goal.

While Bellis is confident the experiences of last year will allow the team to improve, he also knows that the little things will go a long way towards determining how high the Wildcats will climb in the MIAC standings. That is why balance is the name of the game for his 2008 team.

First, Bellis must balance 16 first-year student athletes with his 13 returning letter winners and nine starters. Then he must find stability between a strong and experienced defense with a new goal keeper and a young and speedy offense.

Defensively, the Wildcats’ harmony between one of their three incoming first-year student-athletes vying for the starting goal keeper position and a defense that is anchored by team captains Brittany Bernsten and Kim Engel, will play a major role in the team’s success. Bernsten and Engel will count on Brittany Deeb and Kayla Engel to help on the defensive end as well.

While Bellis expects the “Brittanys and Engels” to help keep teams off the scoreboard, he is also excited about the team’s speed on offense. Leading that offensive charge will be midfielders Mikaelyn Llewellyn, Gina Thorwick and Kelsey Nistler. Nistler earned all-conference honorable mention honors last year and is the team’s leading returning point scorer. Also providing speed and a scoring threat up front will be Bre Olson and Kaitlin Kramer.

Overall, Bellis said he “expects the team will continue to improve in every facet of the game.” In particular he looks forward to seeing improved knowledge and game savvy among his returners. “I think our sophomores learned a great deal about game management and have continued to improve their technical ability. That combination should allow them to step up to the challenge this year. It will also help them to set a strong example for the incomers.” If the Wildcats are able to continue their steady improvement, do the little things right, and find a strong team balance, they may well be one of the most improved teams in the MIAC.

Saint Mary's

Coach: Eric Zimmerman

Career Record: 0-0-0 (1st season)

2007 Finish: 7th (4-6-1 MIAC, 10-7-1 overall)

Saint Mary's Season Preview

Eric Zimmerman has taken one giant step forward, leaping from being the Cardinals’ assistant coach, to the head coach of the Saint Mary’s University women’s soccer team.

Now the first-year head coach is hoping his team can do the same thing — take a giant step forward after coming off a 10-7-1 (4-6-1 in the MIAC) overall mark a year ago.

And according to Zimmerman, a repeat of 2007 is not in the cards for the Cardinals — especially with the hand that he has been dealt.

“We’ve got a lot of talented individuals returning, not to mention several freshmen who have looked pretty impressive thus far,” said Zimmerman, who returns three of his top five scorers — including leading scorer Amy Sibik (Onalaska, Wis.), who netted a team-best 12 goals and shared the team lead with 26 points in her freshman campaign a year ago. “The leadership of our upperclassmen has been outstanding — they have really helped make the transition (from assistant coach to head coach) that much easier.”

What won’t be quite as easy is replacing graduated senior Bridgette Baggio, a First-Team All-Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic conference selection a year ago who shared the team points lead with Sibik.

“Bridgette was a quiet leader who let her play on the field do the talking,” Zimmerman said. “It’s not going to be easy to replace her presence on the field, but I’m looking for Amy (Sibik), Bethany Kaufmann (Green Bay, Wis.), and Keirra Metcalfe (Pickering, Ontario) to pick up the offensive load.”

The defensive load, meanwhile, will be anchored by junior goalkeeper Mariana Sanchez (Puebla, Mexico), who started 14 of the team’s 18 games, boasting a 1.25 goals-against-average and a .773 save percentage.

“Mariana had a solid sophomore season,” said Zimmerman, whose squad kicks off its season on Aug. 29, traveling to UM-Morris for a non-conference game. “And we’re expecting her to pick up right where she left off.”

“Our No. 1 goal this season is to establish a positive team culture, to make sure we have a good team chemistry,” said Zimmerman. “There’s going to be a bit of an adjustment period — the players getting used to their third coach in the last three years, and me earning their trust (going from an assistant coach to the head coach).

“That’s why team chemistry is so important to this group,” Zimmerman added. “I’m excited about what lies ahead for this team — everyone is working hard and eager to get the ball rolling.”

St. Olaf

Coach: Jeremy Driver
Career Record: 12-19-5 (2 seasons)

2007 Finish: 9th (3-6-2 MIAC, 3-12-3 overall)

St. Olaf Season Preview

The St. Olaf women's soccer program, in its third season under head coach Jeremy Driver, will look to a young, but talented roster to make a move upward in the MIAC standings.

Last season the Oles played one of the toughest non-conference schedules in the country and managed only three wins (3-12-3) but Driver is confident, despite another difficult schedule, his team will improve.

"We're focused and determined to improve on last year's results," said Driver, who led St. Olaf to a 9-7-2 campaign in his first season.

To meet high expectations, St. Olaf will have to improve on its offensive output. The 2007 squad was near the bottom of all major offensive statistical categories including goals (10th, 0.91/game), shots (9th, 11.82/game) and assists (8th, 0.73/game).

Midfielders

K.C. Beed (Soph., Rochester, Minn./John Marshall), an All-MIAC honorable mention selection as a first year in 2007, will lead the offensive charge. Beed led the Oles goals (4), assists (2) and shots (37) in her rookie campaign.

The Oles will also have senior captain Jenny Kallas (Minneapolis/South) back at midfield. Kallas scored twice last year and has 13 career points (four goals, five assists).

Kristin Kooman (Sr., Minnetonka, Minn./Hopkins) and Liz Brustad (Jr., Edina, Minn.) each return to the midfield as well after playing significant roles over the last two seasons.

The Oles also added Deanne Schmidt (Fy, Lincoln, Neb./East) and Allyson Connor (Fy, Oregon, Wis.) who could add depth.

Forwards

A pair of first years, Lindsay Howard (Minnetonka, Minn.) and Catie Christoffel (Woodbury, Minn.) will likely get key minutes at forward. Howard was a two-time all-conference selection at Minnetonka and Christoffel a four-time letterwinner at Woodbury.

Defenders

Christina Mills (Jr, White Bear Lake, Minn./St. Paul Academy), the Oles' lone all-conference selection in 2007, will anchor the defensive unit. Mills had five points as a first year in 2006 (one goal, three assists) and has started all 36 games in her first two seasons.

Goalies

Three goalies will compete for the spot this year. Samatha Sickbert (Soph., Woodbury, Minn.) and Elizabeth Huggins (Soph., Eau Claire, Wis./Memorial) split minutes last season. First year Elle Marker (Fy, Salt Lake City, Utah/Rowland Hall) will challenge the returning duo for time.

St. Thomas

Coach: Sheila McGill

Career Record: 10-7-1 (1 season)

2007 Finish: 6th (5-5-1 MIAC, 10-7-1 overall)

St. Thomas Season Preview

Despite some key injuries and a roster loaded with freshmen and sophomores, the 2007 St. Thomas women's soccer team battled its way to a 10-7-1 finish under first-year head coach Sheila McGill. That included a 5-5-1 mark in the conference.

The Tommies are looking to continue their climb toward the top of the conference in 2008, hoping to position themselves to be in the four-team MIAC playoffs with a chance to move on to the NCAA playoffs. The Tommies have 11 returners and 11 newcomers in 2008.

"We have a very talented group of returning players," McGill said. "We have strong leadership from our upperclassmen and captains -- Stephanie Paasch, Courtney Walior, Erin Sprangers and Abie Krause, who will set a high standard for our new players. The new players are athletic, tenacious and determined. When you couple that with our returning talent and the team's resolve to build on last year's success, it will make for an exciting 2008 season."

Walior, named team MVP last fall, will return for her fourth year as a starter. The defender had two goals in 17 games.

Paasch was a repeat honoree on the All-MIAC first team. She also was an honorable mention All-MIAC honoree as a freshman in 2005. She had four goals and one assist in 2007 started all 18 games, and has seven goals and five assists in 52 career games.

Sprangers also made first-team All-MIAC. She scored five goals and added two assists in 18 games last fall. She's played in all 36 games on her career and has seven goals and three assists. Krause has played in 51 career games with 17 points (3g-11a).

Another top returnee is junior Alison True, who has one goal and nine assists in 33 career games.

UST graduated just two seniors, but one was part-time goalie Kaisa Erickson. Sophomore Amanda Domeier is back after playing in 10 games in the nets in 2007.

The Tommies will look to be ready from the outset of the season as they play seven of their first eight games on the road. They start their season Aug. 30 at UW-River Falls. They travel to the Los Angeles area for two games Sept. 5-6, and open MIAC play Sept. 10 at St. Ben's.