

# 2017 MIAC Women's Tennis Preview and Preseason Coaches' Poll

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## 2017 MIAC Women's Tennis Conference Preview

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – Things don't get much more competitive than the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) 2016 women's tennis season. Last year's campaign ended with a three-way tie for the conference championship between Carleton, Gustavus and St. Thomas, and a look ahead at the 2017 season reveals there could be just as much drama and excitement at the top this season.

A year ago, the Knights, Gusties and Tommies each went 9-1 in conference play, splitting their round-robin and each claiming a share of the MIAC championship. The tri-title was fitting for all three teams and their outstanding 2016 campaigns. Gustavus went 22-8 and added the MIAC Playoff crown and an NCAA bid to its great season, while Carleton finished 15-5 and St. Thomas went 16-3 overall. All three programs appear poised to continue challenging one another for conference supremacy.

St. Olaf went 7-3 a year ago, defeating all other teams that didn't tie for first, and the Oles posted a 10-5 overall record while finishing fourth in the MIAC. Bethel had an outstanding 19-5 overall record, and went 6-4 in conference play to join the top five, and St. Catherine was 10-9 overall and an even 5-5 in the conference to finish sixth and round out the sixth and final spot in the MIAC Playoffs.

Saint Mary's went 13-7 overall, but just 4-6 in the league and finished just on the outside looking in of the conference postseason tournament. Saint Benedict was a game back of the Cardinals at 3-7 (6-10 overall). Hamline went 7-12 overall and 2-8 in league play to finish ninth, Macalester (4-13, 1-9 MIAC) was 10th and Concordia (0-16, 0-10 MIAC) rounded out the 2016 standings.

After 2016's parity, the 2017 season opens with plenty of big questions. Will one of last season's tri-champions separate themselves from the pack, or will it be another photo finish atop the standings? Are there any other teams ready to take that next step into the title race as well? Which teams will contend for the six Playoff bids, and who will rise to the occasion in the postseason to earn the MIAC's automatic bid to the NCAA tournament? Fortunately, the season is already under way, and the answers will materialize over and exciting three months.

## COACHES CAST THEIR VOTES

After the too-close-to-call finish in 2016, the MIAC coaches expect it to be tight at the top again in 2017. In fact, they expect it to be so tight there was a tie for first place in the 2017 MIAC Women's Tennis Preseason Coaches' Poll. Both Carleton and Gustavus received 93 points to sit together atop the poll, with Carleton getting five first-place votes and Gustavus receiving four.

The Knights hope to stay at the top of the standings behind two-time All-MIAC selection Danielle Vasiliev, who was 12-3 at No. 1 singles a year ago, and the team has high hopes for first-year contributors Iman Quereshi and Zoe Park. The Gusties are again led by star senior Michaela Schulz and fellow All-MIAC picks Ally Baker and Briana Hartmann.

St. Thomas also got plenty of love from the coaches after last season's co-championship also, as the Tommies got the other two first-place votes and a total of 84 points to finish third in the poll. UST has a ton of experience back, with All-MIAC senior Paige Becher and two-time All-Conference juniors Caitlin Bakke and Jenna Zimmerman.

Bethel and St. Olaf were separated by just two points in the preseason poll, with the Royals and their 66 points coming in fourth, and the Oles finishing fifth with 64 points. Bethel has a pair of All-MIAC singles players back in Mattie Kidder and Sydney Parkinson, and Jill Weintzettel also returns for the Royals. The Oles have a pair of talented juniors back in their lineup, with All-MIAC singles and doubles selection Margaret Zimmerman and classmate Erin McDonald both returning.

St. Catherine is expected to join the six-team Playoff field with 56 points to finish sixth in the poll. The Wildcats will be led by All-MIAC senior Alicia Knoll and junior Julia Sporer. Saint Benedict and Saint Mary's both tied for seventh with 42 points each in the poll and hope to be in the Playoff mix as well. The Blazers bring back All-MIAC senior Laura Finn and talented junior Taylor Kraemer for first-year Head Coach Michael Engdahl, and the Cardinals will be led by seniors Haley Jorgensen and Megan Vandenberg, and have high hopes for the continued emergence of All-MIAC sophomore Laura Sondag.

Macalester (29 points) edged Hamline (24 points) by five points for ninth in the poll, and Concordia (13 points) grabbed the final spot in the



coaches' rankings. The Scots welcome back junior Lily Stein and a pair of sophomores – Della Brown and Jessica Ilc – to lead the way in 2017. Hamline has a senior-laden lineup for first-year coach Julia Courter, with Jordan Danielson, Lilli Dennison and Emily Wollmuth all back in the Pipers' lineup. First-year Cobber Head Coach Joseph Murrey has top singles winner Kendra Stoick back, and a promising sophomore duo in Lisa Neumann and Breann Adamek.

### A CLOSER LOOK

The rest of the 2017 MIAC Women's Tennis Preview contains complete results from the 2017 Preseason Coaches' Poll, MIAC Playoff details, helpful links and a preview for each team submitted by their sports information director. The MIAC web site - [www.miacathletics.com](http://www.miacathletics.com) - will be an outstanding source for MIAC women's tennis news, schedules, scores, stats and more throughout the 2017 season.

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

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### 2017 MIAC Women's Tennis Preseason Coaches' Poll

Coaches voted for every team in the conference except their own team. Points were assigned for each vote (10 for first, nine 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.

2017 MIAC Women's Tennis Preseason Coaches' Poll		
Rank	Institution	Total
T1.	Carleton (5)	93
T1.	Gustavus (4)	93
3.	St. Thomas (2)	84
4.	Bethel	66
5.	St. Olaf	64
6.	St. Catherine	56
T7.	Saint Benedict	42
T7.	Saint Mary's	42
9.	Macalester	29
10.	Hamline	24
11.	Concordia	13

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### 2017 MIAC Women's Tennis Playoffs

The 2017 MIAC Tennis Playoffs will mark the third-straight season of the new tournament format, which has top seeds hosting each round over the course of the five-day Playoffs. The field will include the top six teams in the conference standings, squaring off in a single-elimination tournament. Teams seeded No. 3 through No. 6 will square off on May 3 in the quarterfinals, with the winners meeting the top two seeds in the semifinals on May 5. The championship match will be held May 7 on the home court of the top remaining seed. The winner will receive the MIAC's automatic bid to the 2017 NCAA Division III Women's Tennis Tournament.

| [2017 MIAC Women's Tennis Playoffs Web site](#) |

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### MIAC Women's Tennis Links

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### MIAC Team-by-Team Previews

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**BETHEL** | [Royals' women's tennis home page](#) |  
**Head coach**  
• Drew Fernelius (5th season)  
**A Year Ago**  
• 6-4 MIAC (5th place) | 19-5 Overall

### In the 2016 Postseason

- Lost to No. 4 St. Olaf, 5-4 in MIAC Quarterfinals

### Players to Watch

- Mattie Kidder (Jr. | 2016 MIAC All-Conference Singles)
- Sydney Parkinson (So. | 2016 MIAC All-Conference Singles)
- Jill Weintzettel (So. | Went 20-3 in singles play in 2016 and 16-7 in doubles)

### Did You Know?

- The Bethel women set a new program record with 19 wins in 2016, including a perfect 13-0 record in nonconference matches. The Royals had three separate winning streaks where they won five, six and eight matches in a row. All five of Bethel's losses - four in the regular season and one in the MIAC Playoffs - came at the hands of the four teams ahead of the Royals in the conference standings.



## CARLETON | [Knights' women's tennis home page](#) |

### Head coach

- Luciano Battaglini (10th season)

### A Year Ago

- 9-1 MIAC (T-1st place) | 15-5 Overall — third MIAC regular-season title since 2012.

### In the 2016 Postseason

- MIAC postseason results (semifinals — def. St. Olaf, 6-2; finals — lost to Gustavus, 5-0)

### Players to Watch

- Danielle Vasiliev (Jr. | won second straight All-MIAC award for singles in 2016; posted 12-3 ledger at top spot in the lineup last season)
- Iman Quereshi (Fy. | advanced to fifth round of singles at the ITA Midwest Regional)
- Zoe Park (Fy. | advanced to fifth round of singles at the ITA Midwest Regional)

### Did You Know?

- Carleton is a conference best 46-4 in MIAC matches over the last five seasons, winning three regular-season titles over that span.



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

### Head coach

- Joseph Murrey (1st season)

### A Year Ago

- 0-10 MIAC (11th place) | 0-16 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Kendra Stoick (Jr. | 2-year starter; led the team in singles wins in 2016)
- Lisa Neumann (So. | No.3 singles in 2016)
- Breann Adamek (So. | No.6 singles in 2016)

### Did You Know?

- Concordia sophomore Lisa Neumann grew up on a dairy farm.



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

### Head coach

- Jon Carlson (27th season)

### A Year Ago

- 9-1 MIAC (First place) | 22-8 Overall

### In the 2016 Postseason

- Defeated Wheaton 5-1 in the NCAA first round, followed by a 5-2 loss to No. 9 Chicago.

### Players to Watch

- Michaela Schulz (Senior | 2016 All-Conference ... ranked No. 20 nationally in doubles with Ally Baker ... ranked No. 15 regionally in singles ... last season went 18-14 in singles (8-1 MIAC) and 22-9 in doubles (8-1 MIAC))
- Ally Baker (Junior | 2016 All-Conference ... ranked No. 20 nationally in doubles with Michaela Schulz ... last season went 22-8 in singles (8-1 MIAC) and 24-6 in doubles (8-1 MIAC))
- Briana Hartmann (Sophomore | 2016 All-Conference ... last season went 24-8 in singles (10-0 MIAC) and 21-5 in doubles (8-1 MIAC))

### Did You Know?

- In 26 seasons at the helm, coach Jon Carlson has directed the Gusties to 22 MIAC championships and holds a 254-7 record in league play.



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

### Head coach

- Julia Courter (1st season)

### A Year Ago

- 2-9 MIAC (9th place) | 7-12 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Jordan Danielson (Sr., 3 year regular, played No. 1 doubles last year)
- Lilli Denison (Sr., 3 year regular, 10-8 in singles last year, only returning player with winning record)
- Emily Wollmuth (Sr., 3 year regular playing singles and doubles)

### Did You Know?

- Emily Wollmuth will be presenting research papers on a biology study on antibiotic resistance and a study on Charles Darwin's book "Origin of the Species" in April at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research at the University of Memphis.

## MACALESTER | [Scots' women's tennis home page](#) |



### Head coach

- Jason Muhl (12th season)

### A Year Ago

- 1-9 MIAC (10th place) | 4-13 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Lily Stein (Jr. | 9-10 overall in singles, 8-9 at No. 2-3 singles)
- Della Brown (So. | Played at No. 1 singles as a first year)
- Jessica Ilc (So. | 4-8 at No. 4 singles as a first year)

### Did You Know?

- The Scots return five of their top six players from last year and have no seniors on this year's roster.

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



### Head coach

- Michael Engdahl (1st season)

### A Year Ago

- 3-7 MIAC (8th place) | 6-11 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Laura Finn (Sr. | All-MIAC Singles in 2015)
- Taylor Kraemer (Jr. | Top returner with five singles wins, eight doubles wins last season)

### Did You Know?

- First-year head coach Michael Engdahl previously coached at Division I South Dakota State University for seven seasons, including five as head coach for both the men's and women's programs.

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



### Head coach

- Megan Gaard (2nd season)

### A Year Ago

- 5-5 MIAC (6th place) | 10-9 Overall

### Players to Watch

- Alicia Knoll (Sr. | 2016 All-MIAC (singles), 2015 All-MIAC (singles), 2015 & 2014 MIAC All-Sportsmanship team; 11-7 singles record in 2016; 34-21 career singles record, No. 11 all-time)
- Julia Sporer (Jr. | 10-7 singles record, 8-9 doubles record in 2016)

### Did You Know?

- St. Kate's tennis team earned All-Academic honors from the International Tennis Association (ITA) last season and had four student-athletes recognized as ITA Scholar-Athletes.



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

### **Head coach**

- Jeff Halberg (19th season)

### **A Year Ago**

- 4-6 MIAC (8th) | 8-10 Overall

### **Players to Watch:**

- Haley Jorgensen (5-9, Sr., Fallon, Nev. | 14-8 in singles, 13-9 in doubles. ... 14 singles wins was tied for third on the team—and marked the third straight season with 13 or more singles wins. ... 13 doubles wins led the team and was a single-season career high).
- Megan Vandenberg (5-7, Sr., De Pere, Wis. | 17-4 in singles, 10-7 in doubles in 2016. ... 17 singles wins in 2016 were a single-season team- and career-high. ... Owned team-best six-match winning streak).
- Laura Sondag (5-6, So. | First-Team All-MIAC as a freshman in 2016. ... Played No. 1 singles in all 20 matches for the Cardinals a year ago, compiling a 13-7 record. ... Finished 11-12 in doubles play—one of six Cardinals with 10 or more doubles wins).

### **Did You Know?**

- The Cardinals closed out the 2016 season having won three straight and six of their last eight. Saint Mary's put together three, three-match winning streaks last year. Megan Vandenberg who boasted a season- and career-high six-match winning streak a year ago, led the Cardinals' late-season charge, winning 12 of her last 15 singles matches.



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

### **Head coach**

- Scott Nesbit (27th season)

### **A Year Ago**

- 7-3 MIAC (4th place) | 10-5 Overall

### **Players to Watch**

- Margaret Zimmerman (Jr. | All-MIAC singles and doubles in 2015-16... 9-3 from No. 2 spot and 2-0 from No. 3... Was 12-3 in doubles... Was 13-2 in doubles matches, including 8-2 in league play.)
- Erin McDonald (Jr. | Was 8-3 from the No. 4 singles spot... Was 6-2 in MIAC play in doubles and 9-4 overall.)



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

### **Head coach**

- Terry Peck (24th season)

### **A Year Ago**

- 9-1 MIAC (T-1st place) | 16-3 Overall

### **In the 2016 Postseason**

- MIAC postseason results (1-1; def. St. Catherine 7-2, lost to Gustavus 5-2)

### **Players to Watch**

- Paige Becher (Sr. | All-MIAC, Career: 44-7 singles, 31-9 doubles)
- Caitlin Bakke (Jr. | 2X All-MIAC, Career: 19-5 singles, 27-5 doubles)
- Jenna Zimmerman (Jr. | 2X All-MIAC, Career: 41-3 singles, 31-7 doubles)

### **Did You Know?**

- Freshmen twins Paige and Taylor McLeod were 2015 Minnesota high school doubles champions for Benilde-St. Margaret's.