

# 2007 MIAC Women's Cross Country Championship Preview

Posted: Oct 19, 2007

Saint Paul, Minn. (Courtesy of Andy Johnson, Maclester College) -- As the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women's athletics, the 2007 women's cross country championships should bring out and exemplify some of the best things about women's sports in the MIAC.



Last year, St. Thomas ended Carleton's two-year run on the title by beating the Knights by 19 points for the team title, while St. Olaf edged Gustavus Adolphus by a single point for third place. UST ended an eight-year championship drought and collected the program's 13<sup>th</sup> MIAC championship. This year, the team competition should again be exciting. Two MIAC are nationally-ranked: St. Olaf is No. 14 (as of Oct. 17) and St. Thomas is No. 21. They are rated second and fourth, respectively in the Central Region.

Gustavus, Carleton, Bethel and St. Benedict are also ranked in the top-ten in the region, and are serious darkhorse challengers to the leading contenders. The Gusties are coming off a strong 11<sup>th</sup>-place finish at the UW-La Crosse Tori Neubauer Invitational and were just behind St. Olaf and St. Thomas at the U of M Roy Griak Invitational. Bethel is as strong at the top of the lineup as many of the nation's top teams.

The Oles and Tommies have combined for 21 team titles in 25 years. They hooked up twice this fall, with St. Olaf edging UST at the Carleton Invite and Griak Invite. The difference to date has been pack running as St. Olaf has shown the deepest lineup in the MIAC. The Oles rarely get out-scored at the fourth and fifth positions in the lineup.

A new MIAC individual champion will be crowned as the competition opens up considerably following the graduation of Gustavus star Hailey Harren, who won the last two races and placed first by an easy 1:32 in '06. The competition for Harren's crown should be a good one.

Returning will be last year's second- and third-place finishers, Nikki Umhoefer from Bethel and Katie Theisen from St. Thomas. Five other All-MIAC runners also return: Erin Lowrey from Macalester, Sarah Bernhardson from Gustavus, Karen Campbell from Carleton, Bergen Holzworth from Concordia and Kelly Russ from St. Thomas.

Bethel's Marie Borner placed second at the U of M meet and third at the UW-Oshkosh Brooks Invitational, and combines with Umhoefer to give the Royals a pair of the MIAC's fastest runners (Umhoefer was fifth at the Brooks Invite). Theisen was the individual champ at the Carleton Invite and the UWEC Blugold Open, while teammate Julie Anderson placed second at Carleton and third at Eau Claire.

MIAC Top-30 finishers at the La Crosse Tori Neubauer Invitational, include Jenna Carlson and Annie Knutson from St. Olaf, Laura Edlund and Bernhardson from Gustavus, Lowrey from Macalester and Hailey Brenden of Concordia. Top-30 finishers from the Griak meet include Borner, Theisen, Umhoefer, Carlson, Edlund, Anderson and Lowrey.

## **Augsburg**

**Coach:** Dennis Barker (14th season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 12th

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| <b>Augsburg Athletes to Watch</b>                                |
| <b>Jennifer Lovering</b> (Fr., Bemidji, Minn.)                   |
| <b>Kim Carlson</b> (Fr., New Brighton, Minn./Irondale)           |
| <b>Tori Bahr</b> (Jr., Brainerd, Minn.)                          |
| <b>Ashley Stoffers</b> (Sr., Elk River, Minn.)                   |
| <b>Sarah Peloquin</b> (Sr., Prescott, Wis.)                      |
| <b>Bree McLuen</b> (Fr., Maple Grove, Minn./Alpha Omega Academy) |

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| <b>Augsburg Championship Preview</b> |
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The Augsburg women's cross country team is beginning to peak at the perfect time. With the MIAC Championships coming up, the Auggies are coming off one of their best performances of the season, as all six runners produced personal-best 6,000-meter times at the Wisconsin-La Crosse Tori Neubauer Invitational on Oct. 13.

With just two seniors and one junior on the roster, the young Auggie lineup has goals of improving from last season's 12th-place finish at the MIAC Championships and 23rd-place finish at the NCAA Division III Central Regional.

Jennifer Lovering (Fr., Bemidji, Minn.) has made the adjustment to the 6,000-meter collegiate women's distance very well. In her three 6,000-meter events so far this season, she has cut her time from 25:46.70 to 24:35.46 -- a 71-second improvement. She placed 16th at the University of Minnesota Roy Griak Invitational on Oct. 6 (25:19.54, fourth-fastest time among MIAC runners at the meet) and 139th at the competitive Wisconsin-La Crosse meet (24:35.46), with the 25th-fastest time among MIAC runners at the event.

Kim Carlson (Fr., New Brighton, Minn./Irondale HS) has also adjusted well to the longer college distance, coming off a 26:17.16 time at the Wisconsin-La Crosse meet. Ashley Stoffers (Sr., Elk River, Minn.) and Sarah Peloquin (Sr., Prescott, Wis.), the lone seniors on the roster, have shown strong improvement, and both come in after setting personal-best times at the Wisconsin-La Crosse meet (27:25.06 for Stoffers, 27:38.75 for Peloquin).

Tori Bahr (Jr., Brainerd, Minn.) ran a personal-best 27:31.90 at the Minnesota Roy Griak Invitational. Bree McLuen (Fr., Maple Grove, Minn./Alpha Omega Academy HS), Winter Shaler (So., Chatfield, Minn./Chosen Valley HS) and Samantha Schuder (Fr., Waukesha, Wis./Waukesha South HS) have also shown improvement throughout the season.

## Bethel

**Coach:** Jim Timp (3rd season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 10th

| Bethel Athletes to Watch |
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| Nikki Umhoefer           |
| Marie Borner             |

| Bethel Championship Preview                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| The Bethel University Women's Cross Country team is looking to move into the top tier in the team standings after a disappointing finish a year ago. The Lady Royals have had very strong team performances at the St. Olaf Invitational, the Roy Griak Invitational, and the Oshkosh Brooks Invitational, where they defeated a couple nationally ranked teams and came within 18 points of a 2 <sup>nd</sup> place finish, which is providing momentum going into the conference meet. Leading the way is All Conference and last year's runner up performer, Nikki Umhoefer. A great addition to the team this year has been Marie Borner who is really running well and should vie along with Nikki for the individual title. |
| In addition to Nikki and Marie are a host of very strong and talented freshman, including Julia Holm, Kristin Mork, Kayla Jelen, and Kristin Tengwall. Rounding out the team and adding depth are veterans Angie Mumbleau, Hannah Carlson and Emily Anderson.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

## Carleton

**Coach:** Donna Ricks (15th season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 2nd

| Carleton Athletes to Watch |
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**Karen Campbell** (Jr./Rochester, N.Y./Brighton)

**Sarah Forzley** (So./South Windsor, Conn.)

**Heather Hoecker** (Sr./Rochester, Minn./Century)

**Laura Roach** (So./Lakeville, Minn./North)

**Carleton Championship Preview**

The Knights enjoy the leadership of a senior class that helped Carleton qualify three times for the NCAA Championships and repeat as MIAC Champions in 2004 and 2005.

The Knights have placed among the top three teams in the conference during nine of the previous 13 years. In addition to a pair of MIAC crowns, Carleton recorded runner-up finishes in 1995, 2002 and 2006.

Carleton has been building momentum throughout the fall season and is ranked eighth in the central region. The Knights ran without two of their top runners for the majority of the schedule.

Sophomores Sarah Forzley (South Windsor, Conn.) and Laura Roach (Lakeville, Minn./North) have paced the Knights throughout the fall. Forzley has three top-12 finishes to go with her 60th place showing at the Roy Griak Invitational. Roach owns a pair of Top-10 finishes this season and came in 64th at Roy Griak. She earned honorable mention at the 2006 MIAC Championships as she finished 16th.

One of the biggest additions for the squad has been the mid-season comeback of Karen Campbell (Jr./Rochester, N.Y./Brighton) who was held out of competition the first four weeks due to injury. Upon returning to active racing, Campbell has posted finishes of eighth and 13th place. She earned All-MIAC honors with her eighth place finish at the 2006 MIAC Championships.

Heather Hoecker (Sr./Rochester, Minn./Century) was 19th at last year’s event, earning honorable mention.

**Concordia**

**Coach:** Marv Roeske (9th season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 7th

**Concordia Athletes to Watch**

**Hailey Brenden** (Fr., Rothsay, Minn.)

**Concordia Championship Preview**

The 2007 Concordia women's cross country team returns to having one standout runner and several quality team runners. Freshman Hailey Brenden (Rothsay, Minn.) has led the Cobbers in four of the team's five meets this season and will make a push to earn all-conference honors in her very first conference meet.

Concordia will be looking to improve on their seventh-place finish from the 2006 meet and get back into the top six of the conference for the first time since 2002.

Brenden has posted a pair of third-place finishes in 2007. She claimed third place in the UND Invitational in a time of 19:05 and then equaled that finish by coming in third at the Jamestown Invitational with a mark of 19:26.11. Brenden also has a top 30 finish at the prestigious Drews-Neubauer Invite and a top 40 place at the Roy Griak Invite. Her time of 23:13 at the Drew-Neubauer Meet is the fastest of the season over a championship course.

After Brenden, Concordia will be looking for fast finishes from seniors Meagan Hansen (Minot, N.D.) and Maria Middleton (Northfield, Minn.), sophomore Anna Hagen (East Grand Forks, Minn.) and freshman Rachel Pederson (Plymouth, Minn./Wayzata HS). All four have rounded out the top five for Concordia in the past three meets of the season, and all four have steadily improved throughout the year.

## **Gustavus**

**Coach:** Jed Friedrich (4th season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 4th

### **Gustavus Athletes to Watch**

**Laura Edlund** (Sr.)

**Sarah Bernhardson** (Sr.)

**Sarah Willis** (Sr.)

### **Gustavus Championship Preview**

The Gustavus women's cross-country team looks to jump into the top three at the MIAC Championships after posting fourth place finishes for the past two years.

Senior Laura Edlund has emerged as this year's top runner replacing two-time MIAC champion and NCAA Central Region Runner of the Year Hailey Harren. Edlund, who has been the top Gustie finisher in every meet this season, will look to improve on last year's 29<sup>th</sup>-place finish at the conference meet. Senior Sarah Bernhardson, the lone returning all-conference runner after placing seventh at the conference championships in 2006, has been improving throughout the season after suffering an early-season injury. Senior Sarah Willis will look to improve on her 53<sup>rd</sup>-place finish at last year's conference meet. First-year runners Megan Lundgren and Kate Reins have been consistent as the team's second and third runners this season and these two talented young performers could be the key to the Gusties jumping into the top three in the team standings in 2007. Gustavus enters the 2007 MIAC Championships rated sixth in the USTFCCA Midwest Region rankings.

## **Hamline**

**Coach:** Paul Schmaedeke (2nd season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 8th

### **Hamline Athletes to Watch**

**Ashley Cooper** (So., Stillwater, Minn.)

**Rachel Glissman** (So., Omaha, Neb.)

**Rachel Simmer** (So., Champlin, Minn.)

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| <b>Hamline Championship Preview</b>           |
| For the second consecutive season, head coach |

## **Macalester**

**Coach:** Jordan Cushing (8th season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 6th

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| <b>Macalester Athletes to Watch</b>                       |
| <b>Erin Lowrey</b> (So., Whitefish Bay, Wis.)             |
| <b>Emily Dunn</b> (Jr., Madison, Wis. / East)             |
| <b>Elizabeth Nelson</b> (Sr., Rapid City, S.D. / Stevens) |

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| <b>Macalester Championship Preview</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Macalester graduated last year's MIAC fourth-place finisher Callie PaStarr, but is looking to be a factor in this year's meet and improve upon last season's sixth-place finish. The Scots are coming off a 14 <sup>th</sup> -place finish out of 27 teams at the UW-La Crosse Tori Neubauer Invitational, while earlier this fall took sixth of 25 at the St. Olaf Invitational, 16 <sup>th</sup> of 42 at the U of M Roy Griak Invitational, and fourth of 14 at the St. Olaf Pre-National meet.                                                                              |
| Erin Lowrey (So., Whitefish Bay, Wis.) was the MIAC's highest-finishing newcomer a year ago when she placed sixth at Como Park and she has been enjoying another productive campaign this fall. The team's No. 1 runner, Lowrey was fifth among all MIAC competitors when she placed 22 <sup>nd</sup> at the Neubauer race. She was also 28 <sup>th</sup> at the huge Griak meet and eighth at the Pre-Nationals.                                                                                                                                                               |
| Veterans Emily Dunn (Jr., Madison, Wis. / East) and Elizabeth Nelson (Sr., Rapid City, S.D. / Stevens) have shown steady progress throughout their careers and are running at their best heading into the conference championships. They have consistently been Mac's second and third runners this season. For the Scots to match or improve on last year's team finish, the team will also need big races from newcomers Anastasia Begej (Fy., Littleton, Colo. / Lakewood) and Libby Tollefson (Fy., Billings, Mont.), as well as Emilie Schur (So., Pagosa Springs, Colo.). |

## **Saint Benedict**

**Coach:** Robin Balder-Lanoue (11th season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 5th

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| <b>Saint Benedict Athletes to Watch</b> |
| <b>Margot Branigan</b> (So.)            |
| <b>Kaylee Rasmussen</b> (Sr.)           |
| <b>Maggie Donahue</b> (Jr.)             |
| <b>Kristen Haubrich</b> (Sr.)           |

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| <b>Saint Benedict Championship Preview</b> |
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The old childhood tale of the tortoise and the hare is all too familiar with most of us, but especially so with the Blazers cross country runners. The Blazers will draw from the wisdom of familiar tale by modeling their running styles after the endless perseverance of the tortoise and the blazing speed of the hare.

Entering her eleventh season as College of Saint Benedict cross country coach, Robin Balder-Lanoue returns her five top runners from the 2006 season. Something of a rarity in collegiate sports today. Balder-Lanoue's veteran squad logged close to 11,170 miles in a grueling off-season training regimen, with the hopes of yielding favorable results as the season wears on. After finishing 9th at the NCAA Division III Central Regional Meet in Chicago last season, this is a team that is determined to go even further and won't stop at anything -- until that vision becomes a reality.

Seniors Kaylee Rasmussen (Waconia, Minn./Waconia H.S.) and Kristin Haubrich (Shakopee, Minn./Shakopee H.S.) will lead the class of 2008. Rasmussen earned honorable mention All-MIAC honors with a 23rd place finish at the 2006 MIAC championships while Haubrich was named to the first inaugural MIAC Sportsmanship Team. Junior Maggie Donahue (Plymouth, Minn./Wayzata H.S.) returns after a 2006 season which she took third at the SJU Invitational, first at the DQ Fall Freeze hosted by UW-Superior and 21st at the MIAC Championships. Sophomore Margot Branigan (Roseville, Minn./Roseville H.S.) returns after a first-year campaign which she took first at the SJU Invitational and lead CSB with a 17th place finish at the MIAC Championships earning her All-MIAC honors.

This season will provide a platform for last season's stars to cement a legacy at the College of Saint Benedict, and a stage for new stars to be born from the woodworks. The beginning of any season usually brings with it a sense of optimism, but the Blazers optimism is grounded in a gifted group of women with the determination to make this season special.

## St. Catherine

**Coach:** Michael Henderson (2nd season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 11th

### St. Catherine Athletes to Watch

**Kristie Bronson** (Jr., Princeton, Minn.)

**Greta Sieve** (So., New Ulm, Minn.)

### St. Catherine Championship Preview

The College of St. Catherine cross country team enters the MIAC cross country championships looking to secure their highest finish since 1998. Throughout the 2007 season the Wildcats have been lead by Kristie Bronson (Jr. Princeton, MN) and Greta Sieve (So, New Ulm).

Bronson who is the team veteran, enters the meet after recently running the second fastest time of here career at the Tori Neubauer Invite. Bronson has continued to improve during the season and will be looked at by head coach Mike Henderson to lead the young Wildcat team. "Kristie has been a consistent runner during her career and continues to show improvement," stated Henderson. "She is a great example for our first year runners to look at and she does a great job being one of the leaders of our team," added Henderson.

In addition to Bronson, Sieve has also ran well throughout the 2007 campaign, including running a personal best earlier in the year at the St. Olaf invite. "Greta is one of our hardest workers, she is continually pushing herself to get better and can always be counted on to be one of the leaders of our team," stated Henderson.

The 2007 version of the Wildcats is very young with six first year of sophomore runners included in the top seven. "It is fun working with a group of runners who work hard on a daily basis, I think we have a group here that will grow into a team that will help us solidify the foundation of our program," stated Henderson.

## Saint Mary's

**Coach:** Ward Berndt (3rd season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 9th

### Saint Mary's Athletes to Watch

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| <b>Anne Shutte</b> (So., Columbia Heights, Minn.) |
| <b>Joanna Pace</b> (Fr., Minocqua, Wis.)          |
| <b>Emily Dee</b> (Fr., Racine, Minn.)             |
| <b>Kate Boisjolie</b> (Austin, Minn.)             |

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| <b>Saint Mary's Championship Preview</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| The goal of the Saint Mary's University women's cross country team has been a simple one all season long — improvement.<br><br>And Cardinal coach Ward Berndt is hoping that approach will continue, as the Cardinals set their sights on improving on their ninth-place finish at last year's MIAC Championships.<br><br>"We have the same approach (to the MIAC Championships) as we have to any other meet — go out and run to their best of our abilities. If they can do that, the improvement will continue," said SMU coach Ward Berndt. "Our goal is to have everyone improve on their season-best times, as a coach, that's all you can ask for." |

**St. Olaf**  
**Coach:** Chris Daymont (27th season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 3rd

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| <b>St. Olaf Athletes to Watch</b> |
| <b>Jenny Carlson</b>              |
| <b>Jackie Kelly</b>               |
| <b>Annie Knutson</b>              |

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| <b>St. Olaf Championship Preview</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| The 14th-ranked St. Olaf women's cross country team is having one of their best seasons since the Oles ran off five straight MIAC titles from 1998-2002.<br><br>St. Olaf has climbed the USTFCCCA polls since the beginning of the fall, placing in the top six of every meet its varsity competed in. The Oles won the five-team Ele Hansen Invite at Carleton and finished second in the 25-team St. Olaf Invitational and the 26-team Brissman/Lundeen Invite in Davenport, Iowa.<br><br>Jenna Carlson has finished in the top five percent of competitors in all races this season including fourth of 89 at Carleton's Ele Hanson Invite, fifth of 369 at the St. Olaf Invitational, tenth of 354 at Augustana's Brissmann-Lundeen race and 14th of 455 at the Tori Neubauer Invite on Oct. 13.<br><br>Jackie Kelly and Annie Knutson, too, will give the Oles top scorers at the MIAC's. The pair has been in the top five for St. Olaf in every meet. A combination of Abby Smith, Michaela McLaughlin, Laura Cook, Margaret Ho, Jennie Hedberg and Casey Baustian could also crack the top seven. |

**St. Thomas**  
**Coach:** Joe Sweeney (28th season)

**2006 Championship Finish:** 1st

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| <b>St. Thomas Athletes to Watch</b> |
| <b>Katie Theisen</b> (Jr.)          |
| <b>Julie Anderson</b> (Sr.)         |
| <b>Kelly Russ</b> (So.)             |

### **St. Thomas Championship Preview**

St. Thomas is expected to battle St. Olaf and Carleton for the 2007 MIAC women's cross country team title.

UST ended a nine-year team title drought at last year's MIAC Championships with 73 points. The Toms' closest pursuers were two-time defending champion Carleton (92) and St. Olaf (113).

To repeat as champions, the Tommies probably need their top three runners to finish in the top 10, get two other runners in the top 30, and hope that can hold off the pack running of St. Olaf and Carleton.

Junior Katie Theisen will seek her third All-MIAC finish and will contend for a top-three individual finish. Theisen has three victories and one fourth in four races this fall -- she finished two spots behind Bethel's Marie Borner out of 100-plus MIAC runners at last month's U of M Griak Invite. The versatile Theisen, who has a 4.0 gpa, helped the Tommies to a rare team sweep of MIAC women's CC and indoor and outdoor track and field in 2006-07. At the outdoor meet in May, she ran on the winning 4x100 and 4x400 relays; won the 400 hurdles in 62.65; placed third in the triple jump (37-4); and took sixth in the long jump (16-7 3-4). In 11 cross country races in 2006 and 2007, she's placed 38th at D-III nationals and had 10 top-eight finishes.

Sophomore Kelly Russ, who placed 15th last season, and the much-improved Julie Anderson also will chase top-seven finishes. Anderson placed 109th, 75th and 96th in her first three conference meets but will contend for top-10 this season.

Also looking for top-30 finishes will be Freshmen Raynee DeGrio and Allie Metzler, soph Alexandria Johnson, and seniors Kalsey Larson and Anne Iddins.

UST's 28th-year coach Joe Sweeney has guided Tommie CC, indoor track and outdoor track teams to 57 team championships out of a possible 77 all-time.