

2009 MIAC Women's Cross Country Championship Preview

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St. Paul, Minn. – The 2009 MIAC Women's Cross Country Championship will take place this Saturday, October 31 at Como Park Golf Course in St. Paul, with the race starting at 2:15 p.m. The men's championship race will follow the women's race with a 3:15 p.m. scheduled start time. The 2009 Championships are hosted by the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University.

Five of the top ten women's teams in the Central Region will take to the course at Saturday's MIAC Championships. A year after being edged by St. Thomas by two points for the MIAC title and beating Carleton by three points, Bethel enters the championship as the #1 team in the region and #14 in the nation. Carleton (#4 in the region, #20 in the nation) will pose a threat to the Royals for the team title, as will St. Thomas (5th in the region, 23rd in the nation). Other regionally ranked MIAC teams include St. Olaf at #7 and Gustavus at #10.

2008 MIAC and NCAA Division III Champion Marie Borner, a senior from Bethel, returns for her final MIAC Championship after winning the MIAC race last season by 45 seconds. Bethel junior Alex Potter and Carleton sophomore Simone Childs-Walker finished second and third last year and will likely pose the biggest threats to Borner. Other returning All-Conference runners from 2008 include: Concordia junior Hailey Brenden, Hamline senior Margot Branigan, Carleton senior Laura Roach, Gustavus junior Brooke Beskau, Saint Benedict sophomore Kaycee Knutson, St. Thomas senior Kelly Russ, Macalester senior Erin Lowrey, Bethel junior Kristin Mork, and Bethel senior Heather Jelen.

[2009 MIAC Cross Country Championships Website](#)



[Augsburg](#)

Coach: Dennis Barker (16th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 12th (319 points)

Augsburg Championship Preview

The Augsburg women's cross country team is looking to make small strides up the ladder at the 2009 MIAC Championships, having not cracked the top half of the conference standings the past three seasons.

The Auggies have seen improvement this year, with three of seven runners recording personal best times on Oct. 17. And while coach Dennis Barker said he is pleased with the improvement he has seen, he admits team-wise, it may be tough to make a marked jump in the conference this year.

"The MIAC on the women's side is very tough," he said. "We have a half-dozen teams ranked nationally, and we aren't as strong as these teams. But we are running closer to some teams than we were at the beginning of the year, and maybe we can surprise somebody."

Augsburg has just one senior runner in Jennifer Lovering (Bemidji, Minn.), and hopes are high for her to continue to do well individually. Lovering has been the team's lead runner by at least 2:50 all season long, and placed as high as 29th in the St. Olaf Invitational. Her career best time is 23:25.27 in the 6K race. Lovering is a junior in terms of eligibility, but plans to graduate in the spring.

"We're hoping Jenny can make All-Conference, improving from her honorable mention last year," Barker said. "She's been our top runner every year she's been here; it would be nice for her to go out with a big race in the conference championships."

The rest of the team consists of sophomores and new members on the team, looking to gain experience for upcoming years. Returners Jennifer Pulscher (SO, Colorado Springs, Colo./Liberty HS) and Kacie Bahr (SO, Brainerd, Minn.) have consistently run below the twenty-nine minute mark all season long, becoming the steady second and third runners on the team.

Newcomers Adrienne Young (FY, Minneapolis, Minn./St. Anthony Village HS), Erika Coe (FY, Roseville, Minn.), Stacia Francis (SR, St. Cloud, Minn.) and Phoebe Novitsky (SO, Coon Rapids, Minn./Concordia Academy HS) will all be looking to set season-best times as they help the Auggies to improvement in 2009.



Bethel

Coach: Jim Timp (5th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 2nd (68 points)

Bethel Championship Preview

Expectations will be high for a Bethel team that has been nationally ranked all season long, climbing as high as #10 according to the United States Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) poll, and they have been #1 in the region since September 29.

With the entire women's squad returning, the 2009 cross country season looks to build upon the success that was achieved last year, which saw the team earn their first ever bid to compete in the NCAA championship meet. Bethel finished 19th out of 32 teams at the national level, and Marie Borner (Sr., Cottage Grove, Minn.) became the school's first ever cross country national champion, winning by more than nine seconds. In addition, the women placed fourth in the Central Region, and second in the conference, led by Borner's first place finish, which earned her MIAC Athlete of the Year honors for the second year in a row. The Royals also return the three other All-Conference runners from last year: Alex Potter (Jr., Windom, Minn.), who finished runner-up to Borner, Kristin Mork (Jr., Cambridge, Minn.) and Heather Jelen (Sr., Sioux Falls, S.D.). Others who look to figure prominently on this year's team include Kayla Jelen (Jr., Sioux Falls, S.D.), Janelle Crary, (Jr., Grand Forks, N.D.), and Kristen Tengwall (Jr., Chisago Lakes, Minn.).

There will be many new faces on the squad this year. Much like last year, any number of new runners could emerge as top contributors to the team. After a great team finish last year at the MIAC Championship meet and NCAA Central Region meets, the women's team looks to contend for the conference and regional titles, and to use their national championship meet experience to place higher this year.



Carleton

Coach: Donna Ricks (17th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 3rd (71 points)

Carleton Championship Preview

The Carleton women's cross country team arrives at the MIAC Championship in the midst of a highly successful campaign. The Knights are currently ranked 20th in the nation and fourth in the Central Region by the USTFCCCA.

Senior Laura Roach (Lakeville, Minn./Lakeville North) hopes to make it four-for-four on earning MIAC recognition. During her first year, Roach finished 16th and received All-MIAC honorable mention. The past two years Roach has comfortably earned All-MIAC honors. Roach was named MIAC Athlete of the Week earlier this season for her impressive third-place finish at the Dan Huston Invitational. She ran a personal best time of 22:39.

Simone Childs-Walker (Soph./Seattle, Wash./Lakeside) took the MIAC by storm as a rookie last year. Childs-Walker earned All-MIAC honors when she finished third at the MIAC Championships. There haven't been any signs of a sophomore slump this year. In three races this year, Childs-Walker has finished first, second and third.

Taylor Ffitch (Portland, Ore./St. Mary's Academy) and Alison Smyth (Billings, Mont./Billings West) will be essential in the Knights bid for a MIAC title. Ffitch ran the best race of her Carleton career at the Don Huston Invitational and finished seventh in a field that included Division I institutions. Smyth and Ffitch were both named All-MIAC honorable mention as rookie runners last season.

Sarah Forzley (Sr./South Windsor, Conn.) was All-MIAC two years ago when she finished fifth, and the Knights just missed winning the conference title. Other runners that may fill out the Knights squad include Nicole Reich (Sr./Appleton, Wis./North), Irene Koplinka-Loehr (Sr/Ithaca, N.Y.) and Claire Franco (Brunswick, Maine).



Concordia

Coach: Marv Roeske (11th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 9th (233 points)

Concordia Championship Preview

Once again Concordia will enter the MIAC Championship Meet with a chance to finish anywhere in five different team spots. CC enters the conference meet after winning their first multi-team championship since of the season. Concordia won the team title at the Cobber Invite on Oct. 13 by placing four runners in the top six and finishing with a final team score of 25 which was over 20 points clear of runner-up St. Scholastica. The first-place finish capped a regular season where Concordia posted a pair of top 3 team finishes and also placed seventh at the Division I and II Montana State meet.

For the third straight year, the Cobbers will be led by Hailey Brenden (So., Rothsay, Minn.). Brenden has fought off an early-season leg injury and looks to be rounding back into top form for the conference meet. She is coming off a second-place finish at the Cobber Invite where she ran a 23:58.9. Brenden has also posted two other top six finishes and finished in the top 25 at the Montana State Invite. Brenden will be hoping to capture her third straight MIAC All-Conference honors at the meet.

During Brenden's absence, Concordia had several other runners step into the team spotlight. Junior Rachel Pederson (Plymouth, Minn./Wayzata HS) has posted several quality finishes during the season. She placed fourth at the Cobber Invite with a time of 24:23.6. Pederson has traded second-place team finishes with freshman Elisabeth Hanson (Moorhead, Minn.). Hanson was the team's top finisher at the Roy Griak Invite and posted a time of 19:58.00 at the Jamestown Invite to finish in fifth place – one spot behind Brenden. The other two spots in the team's top five could be filled by Kristy Singlestad (Jr., Waseca, Minn.), Britney Barnett (Jr., Valley City, N.D.), McKayla Patterson (Sr., Havre, Mont.) and Anna Hagen (Sr., East Grand Forks, Minn.). All four runners have consistently been in the top five of the team in every meet of the season.



Gustavus

Coach: Dale Bahr (1st season)

2008 Championship Finish: 7th (185 points)

Gustavus Championship Preview

The Gustavus Adolphus women's cross country team has battled injury and illness for most of the regular season and new head coach Dale Bahr is hoping that the squad is finally healthy and can improve on the Gusties' seventh place finish at the MIAC Championships last season.

The Gusties sport a youthful roster with only three seniors on the team. Leading the way for Gustavus will be sophomore Brooke Beskau (Hastings, Minn.), who placed ninth at last year's MIAC Championship. She was one of five Gusties to place within the top 58 at the 2008 conference meet. Joining Beskau will be letterwinners Danielle Burgmeier (So., Plymouth, Minn.) (45), Megan Lundgren (Jr., Mankato, Minn.) (49), Vanessa Jones (Sr., Grand Forks, North Dakota) (50), Kim Rostvold (So., Grand Rapids, Minn.) (58), and Kathy Westergren (Jr., Duluth, Minn.). Newcomers who have contributed to the top seven several times this season include Liz Hauer (Fy., Little Falls, Minn.) and Kate Eggers (Fy., Montevideo, Minn.).

Coach Dale Bahr will look to this solid group of returners to help put the team back in the top four in the MIAC, after placing outside the top four last season for just the third time this decade.



Hamline

Coach: Paul Schmaedeke (4th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 5th (136 points)

Hamline Championship Preview

Margot Branigan (Sr., Roseville, Minn.) made a pair of appearances at NCAA national meets during the 2008-09 school year and returns to lead a Piper team under head coach Paul Schmaedeke that is set up to establish themselves as a top team at the MIAC meet.

After a 53rd place finish at the cross country national meet in the fall, Branigan went on to finish 10th in the 10,000 meter run at the outdoor nationals in May. She looks to complete her collegiate career by finishing as one of the best runners not just in the MIAC but in the country this fall.

Despite Branigan's return, the Pipers will run this year without a pair of graduates who were strong for Hamline in 2008. Freya Fitzer and Sara Burns were both top five runners for Hamline and provided strong leadership for the team.

However, Schmaedeke will return a second-year senior who was in Hamline's top five the last two years in Katie Drinane (Roseville, Minn.). Drinane has been consistent in her training, racing and leadership for the Pipers, and looks to finish her collegiate cross country career on a high note.

Two seniors named Rachel – Glissman (Omaha, Neb.) and Simmer (Champlin Park, Minn.) - will also look to contribute to the Piper points this fall. Both have been solid, consistent performers for the Pipers the last three years and will be a key part of the team's leadership this season.

Junior Jessica Kociscak (Ramsey, Minn.) scored in the MIAC meet for the Pipers last year and was consistently in the top three or four on the team. She has come on strong in the last year and will aim to continue that performance this year. Her classmate Lauren Howe (Siren, Wis.) has made tremendous strides after missing a lot of her first year campaign with injuries. Schmaedeke is excited to see what she will be able to do after a healthy off-season as she will fight for a top seven spot, as well.

Schmaedeke also has a trio of sophomores who fought for top seven spots last year and hope to consistently find themselves in the front Piper grouping this year. Carlyne Bocovich (Andover, Minn.), Kaitlyn Frenchick (Paynesville, Minn.) and Sara Holland (Dousman, Wis.) will all be exciting runners to watch on the course this fall.

A pair of first-years overcoming injuries in their senior year of high school join the roster and look to break into the top seven Pipers in their inaugural campaigns. Hilary Murphy (North St. Paul, Minn.) and Claire Walling (Clifton Park, N.Y.) are both hard workers willing to do what it takes to be successful at the collegiate level and were strong runners with their respective high school programs.

With the return of strong leadership and runners who have consistently improved every fall, Schmaedeke expects his team to meet or exceed last year's fifth place MIAC finish and run well at the regional meet, as well.



Macalester

Coach: Jordan Cushing (10th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 8th (193 points)

Macalester Championship Preview
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Macalester is looking to move up from last year's eighth-place conference finish and is looking towards Erin Lowrey (Sr., Whitefish Bay, Wis.) to lead the way. Lowrey has been her team's No. 1 runner in every race she has competed in over the past three years and is seeking to become Macalester's first four-time All-MIAC harrier since former national champion Julia Kirtland (1983-86).

Lowrey placed sixth in 2006, seventh as a sophomore and 12th last fall as a junior. She has been the team's top runner in every meet this fall, placing 10th at the St. Olaf Invitational, 23rd at the U of M Roy Griak, 11th at the Blugold Invitational and 33rd at the Tori Neubauer Invite.

The lineup behind Lowrey is fairly well balanced and these will be the runners who determined if the Scots are able to move up a spot or two. Macalester's second and third runners in most meets, respectively, are Tara McCoy (Jr., Menomonie, Wis.) and Tess Carley (Fy., Cumberland, Me. / Greely). Other Scots who normally are in the mix for a top-five spot, include Libby Tollefson (Jr., Billings, Mont.), Anna Hankins (Sr., Mansfield Center, Conn. / Edwin O. Smith) and Lena Sessions (Sr., Eugene, Ore. / South Eugene).



Saint Benedict

Coach: Robin Balder-Lanoue (13th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 6th (169 points)

Saint Benedict Championship Preview

The College of Saint Benedict Blazers cross country team is currently in their 2009 season with high hopes of moving up from their sixth place finish in the 2008 MIAC Championships and from their ninth place finish at the NCAA Central Regionals. With the talented group of athletes, veterans and first-years alike, there is no doubt that the CSB Blazers are going to be finishing strong this season.

The Blazers roster is made up of athletes that are ready to prove their excellence to everyone. CSB returns five of their top seven competitors from last season. All-MIAC and All-Region selection Kaycee Knutson is one of these returning runners for the Blazers. Along with Knutson is senior runner Alyx Chapman, sophomore Kelly Donahue, junior Ashley Irons, and junior runner Caitlin Schnettler. These athletes will be looked upon to continue their strong times for the Blazers. The first-year runners are also ones to look out for as they are pushing themselves to their max, eager to break into the top seven runners for the Blazers cross country team. In particular, Meagan Smith, who has helped the Blazers finish at the top in their past few races.

The College of Saint Benedict team has set some lofty, yet attainable goals for themselves. They plan on finishing with better standings in the MIAC and to have a strong finish at the NCAA Central Regional. With the talented athletes, incoming and returning, that comprise this team, these goals are far from impossible for the Blazers. Coach Balder- Lanoue has the utmost faith in her team and knows they can push themselves hard enough to reach their goal and beyond. The Blazers all expect nothing but strong finishes from each team member and are not afraid to push one other to their maximum potential. The CSB Blazers are a team to watch out for.



St. Catherine

Coach: Michael Henderson (4th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 11th (305 points)

St. Catherine Championship Preview

The St. Catherine University cross country team has been led by senior Greta Sieve (New Ulm, Minn.) all season long. The outstanding senior is looking to continue her breakout season and improve upon her 33rd place finish from last fall.

So far this season Sieve has finished third at the St. Olaf Invitational, 20th at the Roy Griak Invitational, and 16th at the Tori Neubauer Invitational in her three 6k races.

A pack of hard working freshman and sophomores will look likely make up the rest of the Wildcats top five. Included in that quartet are sophomores Heidi Sande (Grand Marais, Minn.) and Tamar Billiet (Hutchinson, Minn.) and first year runners Renee Crepeau (Elk River, Minn.) and Jessica Rogers (Apple Valley, Minn.).

After that senior Molly Muller (Milltown, Wis.), junior Emily Seidl (Hanska, Minn.), freshman Kelsey Eder (Maple Grove, Minn.) will be looking to round out the top seven for St. Kate's.

The Wildcats are aiming to improve upon last season's 11th place finish as a team and continue their steady individual improvement as well.



Saint Mary's

Coach: Ward Berndt (5th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 10th (285 points)

Saint Mary's Championship Preview

Saint Mary's University cross country coach Ward Berndt will be the first to admit that last year was a learning experience for women's squad.

And from what he's already seen in 2009, his Cardinals are quick study.

"I'm really excited for the team, I really feel like we are able to step up our expectations a couple of notches," he said. "I'm confident that we have the talent and the personalities to become among the best team in SMU cross country history."

The reason for Berndt's confidence? The lessons the Cardinals learned a year ago.

The SMU women were 10th at the MIAC and 19th at the regional. "On the women's side, we ended (2008) with a couple of break-through performances (at the conference and regional championships), which proved to be contagious through the track season and into summer training," said Berndt. "Last year (the women's team) was among the top five teams in school history, and I really feel this year we can make a strong push to be one of SMU's best ever."²

On the women's side, with returners Ashley Acosta (Winnebago, Minn.), Brittany Kuehn (Sauk Rapids, Minn.), Emily Dee (Racine, Minn.), Danielle Miller (Inver Grove Heights, Minn.) and Joanna Pace (Minocqua, Wis.) all back after career seasons in 2008, Berndt is hoping for plenty of ups, and not too many downs, for his Cardinal women.

"The team is determined to make some noise this year," added Berndt.

"Obviously, we realize that we are in one of the premier cross country conferences in the nation, but they aren't about to back down from anyone."

"The change in attitude has been huge, and if they can sustain it, I'm expecting big things from the team this season."



St. Olaf

Coach: Chris Daymont (29th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 4th (104 points)

St. Olaf Championship Preview

Losing their top two runners of the 2008 season to graduation, St. Olaf will look to a mixture of senior leadership and first year talent at the conference championships. The 2009 pre-championship season has been marked by a busy race schedule, with the team competing in many large meets and integrating several new runners into the pack.

Emma Lee (Fy./Saint Paul, Minn./Como Park) has been the team's number one runner all year, placing sixth at the St. Olaf Invitational and 14th at the Roy Griak Invitational. The rest of the Oles' scoring squad has varied throughout the season. Senior captains Abby Smith (Belle Plaine, Minn./Belle Plaine), Michaela McLaughlin (Rosemount, Minn./Rosemount), and Nellie Adams (Duluth, Minn./East) have all been consistent scorers for the team, exchanging positions within the top-seven. Adams was fifth for the team at last year's MIAC championships, Smith was seventh. The team could also look to Maren Westby (So./Salem, Ore./West Salem), who was their second runner at the Tori Neubauer Invitational, or Georgia Greene (Fy./Madison, Wis./West), the Oles' fourth runner at the same race, at the conference race.

In order to improve on last year's fourth place finish, the team will need to remain individually strong, fighting for position behind Lee's consistent performances. The St. Olaf College Oles have won the MIAC cross country championships eight times, most recently in 2002.



St. Thomas

Coach: Joe Sweeney (30th season)

2008 Championship Finish: 1st (66 points)

St. Thomas Championship Preview

The 2009 St. Thomas women's cross country team is gearing up for a busy end-of-season peak.

On Halloween, the Tommies will seek their fourth consecutive MIAC championship. In mid-November, UST will look to secure its fifth consecutive national meet appearance.

The Tommies have had three consecutive close victories in the conference meet and have captured 16 of the 28 MIAC championships contested. In 2006, UST posted a 73-92 margin over the runner-up Carleton; in 2007, in the second closest finish in the 27-year history of the race, the Tommies scored 74 to shade Carleton (76) and St. Olaf (80); in 2008, UST put five runners in the top 18 and its 66 points shaded Bethel (68) and Carleton (71) for the crown.

Coach Joe Sweeney has guided Tommie CC, indoor track and outdoor track teams to 63 team championships out of a possible 81 all-time, including 11 in a row since March 2006.

Currently ranked 23rd in the Division III national poll behind both Bethel and Carleton, St. Thomas will need an excellent race and a bunched pack to have a chance to top the Royals and Knights.

Two-time All-American and four-time All-MIAC honoree Katie Theisen has graduated. But St. Thomas returned six of its top seven runners from 2008, when it placed 14th at the NCAA Championships.

Leading the Tommie pack are senior Kelly Russ (2008: 11th MIAC, 91st NCAA); junior Allie Metzler (2008: 16th MIAC, 129th NCAA); junior Alyssa Rassett-Mehl (2008: 40th MIAC, 216th NCAA); freshman Taylor Berg of Eagan; and sophomores Emma Spoon (2008: 17th MIAC, 155th NCAA) and Nikki Schminski (2008: 38th MIAC, 206th NCAA); Junior Raynee DeGrio (2008: 18th MIAC, 176th NCAA) has been sidelined with an injury.

Russ, a multi-time track and field All-American middle-distance runner, will look to join a select group of four-time All-MIAC honorees. She's placed 15th, 11th and 11th in her three previous conference championships races. Russ placed 27th out of 500 finishers at the U of M Griak race in 23:39, and was 11th out of 203 runners in a strong field at the Willamette race.