

MIAC Women's Cross Country Championship Preview

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ST. PAUL, Minn. – The 2010 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) Women's Cross Country Championships will take place Saturday, Oct. 30, at Como Park Golf Course in St. Paul, Minn. The race will begin at 3:15 p.m., following the men's race which begins at 2:15 p.m. The 2010 MIAC Cross Country Championships are hosted by St. Catherine University.



Carleton College returns as the defending conference champion after posting a dominant 26-point win in 2009. While the Knights will be looking to repeat, there will be a new individual winner for the first time since 2007. Bethel graduate **Marie Borner** won back-to-back titles over her final two seasons in 2008 and 2009.

The Knights should have a good chance to repeat with one of the MIAC's top runners leading the charge and three of their top four back from last year's title team. Carleton junior **Simone Childs-Walker** is the leading returner after finishing second to Borner in 2009 and earning All-MIAC and All-American honors. This season, Childs-Walker has had a great fall, earning the conference Athlete-of-the-Week award twice.

Also back to bolster the Knights' lineup are fellow juniors **Taylor Ffitch** and **Alison Smyth**. Ffitch finished fifth at last year's MIAC meet to earn All-Conference honors, and Smyth was 21st. Carleton enters the MIAC championships ranked 25th in the Division III Women's Cross Country National Coaches' Poll and fifth in the Central Region rankings.

However, the defending champs are going to receive a stern test from an outstanding St. Olaf team that enters with a No. 12 national ranking and the No. 2 ranking in the region. Behind star junior Maren Westby (sixth in 2009, two-time Athlete-of-the-Week in 2010) and sophomores Emma Lee (ninth in 2009) and Rachel Dean (Athlete-of-the-Week in 2010), the Oles present a tremendous challenge to Carleton's repeat hopes.

Other team contenders figure to be St. Thomas, which is ranked sixth in the region and appeared in the "Others receiving votes" section of the national poll with eight points. Bethel holds the No. 7 ranking in the Central Region and Gustavus is right behind at No. 8.

Individually, six All-MIAC runners return from 2009, led by the dynamic duos from Carleton and St. Olaf. Childs-Walker (second) and Ffitch (fifth) were both in the top five a year ago, and the Oles' duo of Westby (sixth) and Lee (ninth) joined them in the top 10. Also back is St. Thomas' **Allie Meztler**, who finished 10th in 2009, and Bethel's **Kristin Mork** was 11th a year ago and is returning to form after an early-season injury. Tommies' sophomore **Taylor Berg** should also be in the mix after finishing in the top 20 in 2009 and earning a MIAC Athlete-of-the-Week honor this fall.

There will be a short awards ceremony following the conclusion of the women's race to honor the MIAC team and individual champions and All-Conference runners. The top 15 finishers in each race automatically earn All-MIAC accolades. Results, recaps and photos will be posted on the MIAC's Cross Country Championships home page following the event.

[2010 MIAC Cross Country Championships Website](#)



Augsburg

Coach: Dennis Barker (17th season)

2009 Championship Finish: 12th (386 points)

Augsburg Championship Preview

The Augsburg College women's cross country team is looking to make small strides up the ladder at the 2010 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference championships, having finished outside the top half of the conference standings the past four seasons.

Augsburg has seen improvement this year, with five runners recording personal-best times on Oct. 16 at the Wisconsin-LaCrosse Invitational Meet.

A duo of first-year runners, Anika Clark (FY, Lakeville, Minn./Lakeville North) and Shayla Fulford (FY, Perham, Minn.), have paced the Auggies this season. Both Clark and Fulford enter the conference meet on a high note, recording season-best times two weeks ago at Wisconsin-LaCrosse. Clark's time of 24:54.8 is the fastest time recorded by an Augsburg runner this season.

The Augsburg team will also be bolstered by a group of veteran runners looking to build upon their results at the conference meet from last year. Kacie Bahr (JR, Brainerd, Minn.) has finished as one of the Auggies' top three runners in five out of the team's six competitions this season. Bahr recorded a personal-best time of 25:35.1 at the Wisconsin-LaCrosse meet Oct. 16, which is more than a minute faster than she recorded at the MIAC championships last year.

Jennifer Pulscher (JR, Colorado Springs, Colo./Liberty HS), Adrienne Young (SO, Minneapolis, Minn./St. Anthony Village HS), and Carissa Miller (SO, Woodbury, Minn.) have all shown improvement this season and will look to aid the Augsburg team score.



Bethel

Coach: Jim Timp (6th season)

2009 Championship Finish: 2nd (91 points)

Bethel Championship Preview

Expectations again will be high for a Bethel team that in spite of graduating Marie Borner and Heather Jelen has their sights on the top spot for the team championships. Borner the most dominant runner in Bethel's history and arguably the most dominant in MIAC history along with Heather Jelen, also a national meet competitor, are sorely missed. Much like the men's team, it has forced the top returners to step it up this year. Leading the charge for the Royals is newcomer Cara Donohue (Fr. Bloomington, MN). Cara recently posted the top 6k time in Bethel's history by a freshman. Alex Potter (Sr., Windom, MN), is returning to her 2008 form where she placed 2nd to Borner in the conference meet. Kristin Mork (Sr., Cambridge, MN), an All-Conference runner in 2009 and a captain on this year's squad has struggled with some early season injuries, is also returning to top form. Kayla Jelen (Sr., Sioux Falls, SD), is also capable of finishing in the top 15 this year. Rounding out the team and strong contributors are: Michelle Benson (Sr., Traverse City, MI), the other co-captain has provided strong leadership. Tera Hereid (Fr., Blaine, MN), has run consistently in the top 5 all year. Laura Zwilling (Jr., Roseville, MN), who struggled through a couple years of injuries is now racing very well again has also been part of the top 5. Carissa Bodette (So., Lakeville, MN) has improved over a minute from last year and along with Emily Anderson (Fr., Mora, MN) are vying for the seventh spot on the team. This team has more depth than any other Bethel team in the past 5 years.



Carleton

Coach: Donna Ricks (18th season)

2009 Championship Finish: 1st (65 points)

Carleton Championship Preview

The Carleton women's cross country team arrives at the MIAC Championship ready to defend its 2009 MIAC title.

Last year, the Knights rode their magic all the way to their seventh NCAA Championship berth where they finished 11th. From that squad the Knights return three members who raced in the national race, one All-American and two other all-region runners. The Knights are currently ranked 25th in the nation and third in the Central Region by the USTFCCCA.

Two time All-American Simone Childs-Walker (Jr./Seattle, Wash./Lakeside) returns to the MIAC Championship after finishing second overall in last year's race. She has, once again, been in dominant form, winning four of the five races she has entered. In the lone race she did not win, she finished second out of 453 racers at the Roy Griak Invitational. Her performances have helped her earn MIAC runner of the week on two separate occasions in 2010.

Taylor Ffitch (Jr./Portland Ore./St. Mary's Academy), an All-MIAC and All-Region honoree last year, looks to improve on her fifth place finish at last year's MIAC championship. In her last race, she posted a second place finish at the Running of the Cows.

Allison Smyth (Jr./Billings, Mont./Billings West) earned All-MIAC honorable mention with a 21st place finish last year and was also All-Region thanks to her 22nd finish at the Central Region race. She has two third place finishes during the 2010 campaign.

If the Knights are to repeat as MIAC championships for the second time in six years, the Knights will need strong races from **Emily Fritz-Endres** (Sr./Carlisle, Mass./Concord-Carlisle), **Kaitlin Randolph** (Jr./Drummond, Wis./Drummond), and Rachel Kittaka (Jr./Chicago, Ill./Northside College Preparatory) to round out the scoring.

"We return a strong core of runners from last season's MIAC and Regional championship team," Carleton head coach Donna Ricks said. "Our team goal is to place in the top two." The Knights are in search of their fourth conference title under Ricks, who has led the team to 12 top-three finishes in the last 16 seasons at the conference meet and seven NCAA Championships appearances.



Concordia

Coach: Marv Roeske (12th season)

2009 Championship Finish: 9th (218 points)

Concordia Championship Preview

Concordia enters the 2010 MIAC Championship Meet with the mentality that Rudyard Kipling wrote about in The Second Jungle Book, "for the strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack."

The Cobbers have been displaying this pack-like mentality the entire season as they hope to break out of their streak of two straight ninth-place finishes at the conference meet.

In order to finish in the top 7 at the MIAC Meet, Concordia will have to get another strong performance from No.1 runner Kristy Singlestad and then hope the strength of the pack will be right behind. Singlestad (Waseca, Minn.) has led Concordia at every meet this year and is coming off her third top 10 finish in 2010. She placed eighth at the Carleton Invite on Oct. 16 and also placed sixth at the Jimmie Invite and ninth at the NDSU Bison Open.

A pair of freshmen finished right behind Singlestad at the Carleton Invite and has been steadily improving throughout the year. Hannah Knickerbocker (Stanchfield, Minn./Cambridge-Isanti HS) posted her first collegiate top 10 by finishing in ninth place. Morgan Christian (Moorhead, Minn.) followed closely behind as she placed 11th at the meet.

The other top runners for CC this season have been Hailey Brenden (Sr., Rothsay, Minn.), Britney Barnett (Sr., Valley City, N.D.) and Caroline McLaughlin (Jr., Rosemount, Minn.). Brenden was an All-MIAC performer in 2007 and 2008 while Barnett and McLaughlin have consistently been in the team's top 5 the entire season.



Gustavus

Coach: Dale Bahr (2nd season)

2009 Championship Finish: 6th (136 points)

Gustavus Championship Preview

The Gustavus women's cross country team has been ranked in the top eight in the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Central Region poll all fall and Coach Dale Bahr feels confident that his squad can run at the front of the pack and be in contention for a top four finish at the 2010 MIAC Championships. Sophomore Kate Eggers (Montevideo, Minn.) has paced the Gusties all year long and she looks to run in the lead pack at the conference meet. Eggers is joined by a veteran group that includes seniors Megan Lundgren (Mankato, Minn.), Laura Secor (Stillwater, Minn.) and Meredith Bache-Wiig (Plymouth, Minn.), juniors Kim Rostvold (Grand Rapids, Minn.) and Danielle Burgmeier (Plymouth, Minn.), and sophomores Liz Hauer (Little Falls, Minn.) and Erica Hett (Burnsville, Minn.). Gustavus finished sixth at the 2009 MIAC Championships.



Hamline

Coach: Paul Schmaedeke (5th season)

2009 Championship Finish: 5th (125 points)

Hamline Championship Preview

The Hamline University women's cross country team will rely on depth as the Pipers look to break a streak of fifth place finishes and move higher up the team placement at this year's championship meet.

Head coach Paul Schmaedeke enters his fifth year overseeing the women's team following the graduation of All-American Margot Branigan. However, the Pipers will look for solid performances from numerous runners in order to make up for Branigan's point totals.

A core of steady returners lead the Pipers, including senior Jessica Kociscak (Sr., Ramsey, Minn.), who has led the team across the line all season. Her classmate Sara Holland (Sr., Dousman, Wis.) has been right behind her in every race. Another senior, Lauren Howe (Siren, Wis.), has also be a weekly top-seven finisher for the team.

Carolyne Bocovich (Jr., Andover, Minn.), Kaitlyn Frenchick (Jr., Paynesville, Minn.), Amber Hoban (Sr., Mendota Heights, Minn.) are additional returners looking to score points for Hamline. A pair of first-years - Madison Watson (Nampa, Idaho), Hannah Toetdter (Fy., Wadena, Minn.) - also hope to bolster the top seven scorers.

While the Pipers lose the punch of points from Branigan, the depth of the team should allow the Pipers to use a team effort to pick up places in the standings at this year's championships.



Macalester

Coach: Betsy Emerson (1st season)

2009 Championship Finish: 8th (162 points)

Macalester Championship Preview

The Scots lost four-time All-MIAC runner Erin Lowrey to graduation, but have shown gradual improvement each meet this fall and are looking improve on last year's eighth-place conference finish under first-year head coach Betsy Emerson.

Tara McCoy (Sr., Menomonie, Wis.) missed all-conference status by just one position after placing 16th at last year's MIAC championships and has led the way for the Scots in most meets this fall, placing 76th at the St. Olaf Invitational 118th out of 451 entrants two weeks ago at the Wisconsin-La Crosse Tori Neubauer Invitational with a 23.52 clocking. Macalester will look for high MIAC finishers from three others who have shown flashes this season: Tess Carley (So., Cumberland, Me.), Libby Tollelfson (Sr., Billings, Mont.) and Anna Schmitz (Fy., St. Paul, Minn. / Central).

The Scots have some solid depth behind the top four with the likes of Anna French (So., Omaha, Neb. / Central), Kelly Cargos (So., Orange, Conn. / Amity Regional), Robin Major (Sr., Putney, Vt. / Bellow Falls Union), Jana Wiegand (Jr., Madison, Wis. / Memorial), Eliza Leahy (Jr., Needham, Mass. / Minuteman Regional) and Becky Kane (Fy., Miladore, Wis. / Auburndale).

"Our women have done a tremendous job of adapting to a new coach this season and we've improved in strength and fitness throughout the season," reports Coach Emerson. "With the leadership of our senior captains, we hope to surprise some teams in the meet."



Saint Benedict

Coach: Robin Balder-Lanoue (14th season)

2009 Championship Finish: 7th (143 points)

Saint Benedict Championship Preview

The College of Saint Benedict Blazer cross country team hopes to make a strong run at an MIAC title this weekend, after earning a second place finish at the Carleton 6K in the team's final tune-up.

The Blazers have been competitive in all their races this fall, winning the SJU Invitational 6K, and then finishing in the top half of all their other races.

CSB has been led by senior runner Katie Schwarz, junior Kaycee Knutson, and sophomore Megan Smith most of the season, while first-year runner Kelsie Larson has also been placing well for the Blazers. Saint Ben's returns six of their top seven runners from the 2009 squad.

Last year, the Blazers finished the top half of the conference and they have hopes of continuing their climb to an MIAC championship.



St. Catherine

Coach: Michael Henderson (5th season)

2009 Championship Finish: 10th (276 points)

St. Catherine Championship Preview

With only one senior, and ten first-year runners on the roster, the 2010 MIAC Cross Country Championships will be a valuable learning experience for a young St. Kate's team.

Sophomore Jessica Rogers (Apple Valley, Minn.) has been the top runner for the Wildcats in the past three meets leading up to the MIAC Championships. She has also run one of the ten fastest 6k times in SCU history this season, clocking a 24:39 at the BluGold Invitational.

Joining Rogers in the top seven for St. Kate's this year has been a variety of underclassmen. Junior Tamar Billiet (Hutchinson, Minn.), sophomore Renee Crepeau (Elk River, Minn.) first years Kristina Poss (Roseville, Minn.), Erin Coughlin (New Richmond, Wisc.), Sarah Howe (Siren, Wisc.), Anna Peterson (Lino Lakes, Minn.) and Emily Eastman (Plymouth, Minn.) have all rotated throughout the team's scoring ranks this year.

Emily Seidl (Sleepy Eye, Minn.) is the lone senior for the Wildcats. She will be hoping to leave Como Park with the best run of her four year career, and help her young teammates continue to improve in the MIAC.



Saint Mary's

Coach: Ward Berndt (6th season)

2009 Championship Finish: 10th (344 points)

Saint Mary's Championship Preview

Saint Mary's University men's and women's cross country coach Ward Berndt could not have asked for a better way for his Cardinals to head into the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Championships.

In their final "tune-up" at the Jim Drews/Tori Neubauer Invitational, the Cardinals not only turned in their best performance of the season, but for virtually the entire squad, it was the best performance of their collegiate careers.

"It was the perfect final meet before the conference championships," said Berndt. "The guys put together the by far the best performance of the season — and probably the best performance in the program's last 15 years. It was great to see, especially with the conference championships right around the corner.

"And on the women's side, we bounced back from a sub-par showing (at the Dan Huston Invitational) and really turned the corner," Berndt added. "It was was a career day for us — everyone that ran had a PR, which tells me we are right where we want to be."

David Feather (Oak Creek, Wis.) has been the Cardinal men's leader all season, posting his fifth straight team-leading effort at the Jim Drews, touring the eight-kilometer course in a career-best 26:18. Peter Borash (Bowlus, Minn.), Jake Traxler (Le Center, Minn.), Michael Wolter (Rushford, Minn.), Benton Kodet () and Robby McGuire (Rochester, Minn.) have also enjoyed stellar seasons and Berndt is expecting more of the same at the conference championships.

"The guys have really gotten after it this year," Berndt said. "They came into the season with a different attitude and are really focused on making some noise at the MIAC meet."

On the women's side, Berndt has enjoyed the luxury of having a different athlete step up and be the lead runner virtually every week. Emily Dee (Racine, Minn.) was the latest, as the Cardinal senior posted a six-kilometer time of 24:19 at the Tori Neubauer Invitational.

Kristen Thelen (Rochester, Minn.), Amy Spitzmueller (New Brighton, Minn.) and Joanna Pace (Minocqua, Wis.) have also had their time as SMU's No. 1 runner, and Berndt is hoping that all four have saved their best for last.

"We're getting better with each week," the SMU head coach said. "Hopefully that will continue this weekend.

"Everyone's running pretty well right now, and everyone's eager to put together their best effort yet (at the MIAC Championships)."



St. Olaf

Coach: Chris Daymont (30th season)

2009 Championship Finish: 4th (98 points)

St. Olaf Championship Preview

The St. Olaf women's cross country team, ranked 14th in the country and second in the central region, enters the MIAC Championships with a full head of steam. St. Olaf finished fourth of 27 in their last race -- the Tori Neubauer Invitational - and have been in the top four in each of its four meets this season. In fact only two Division III schools -- Wartburg on Oct. 9 and Luther on Oct. 16 -- have defeated the Oles in a race this season. (Division II UMD at St. Olaf Invitational, Division II Truman State at Les Duke, Division I Northwestern and McMaster University at Loyola Lakefront Invitational, Division I NDSU and Univ. of Minnesota at Tori Neubauer Invitational).

The Oles have used a steady and deep lineup in each of their races. Maren Westby, who broke a school record with her second place run on Oct. 16, Rachel Dean and Emma Lee have been the team's 1-2-3 runners in almost every race this season. The team has another group close behind with Sophie Pietrick, Hanna Dennis and Christine Muller. The Oles' Becca Bevans, Leah Roth and Laura Cook have also been challenging to score. St. Olaf has won eight MIAC titles, which included a five-peat from 1998-2002.



St. Thomas

Coach: Joe Sweeney (31st season)

2008 Championship Finish: 3rd (98 points)

St. Thomas Championship Preview

The Tommie women's cross country team will look to post another top-three finish at Saturday's 12-team MIAC Championships at St. Paul's Como Golf Course. Under 31st-year head coach Joe Sweeney, the Tommies will begin the 6,000-meter race at 3:15 p.m.

Sweeney guided the Toms to consecutive team crowns from 2006-2008 but settled for third place last fall. Sweeney has a young team that he hopes can put together strong races at the conference and regional meets.

This weekend, St. Olaf and Carleton appear to be the women's teams to beat, with UST, Bethel, Gustavus and St. Ben's also looking to contend. The Tommies have four freshmen in their top eight and will look for that group to run aggressively in their first collegiate postseason races.

Sophomore Taylor Berg has led the Tommies all fall and is gunning for a top-five finish. Berg was the third MIAC finisher at the Sept. 25 U of M Griak race, and has first-place finishes in her other three fall races. In her last performance, Oct. 16 at the Gettysburg (Pa.) Invite, she took first in a field of 291 runners. Last cross country seasons, Berg placed 19th at the conference championships and at the regional meet was 38th (fourth freshman finisher). Last March in track and field she ran on the Toms' NCAA champion indoor distance medley relay unit.

Senior Allie Metzler has improved each season at the MIAC Championships -- from 30th as a freshman to 16th as a sophomore to 10th last fall. Fellow senior Raynee DeGrio was slowed by an injury in 2009 but placed 18th at the 2008 conference meet. Freshman Erin Statz has been UST's No. 3 runner all season.