

2011 MIAC Women's Cross Country Championship Preview

Posted: Oct 26, 2011

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- The 2011 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) Women's Cross Country Championships will be held Saturday, Oct. 29, with the two teams from Northfield expected to battle it out for the title along with an extremely talented field competing for individual honors.

Saturday's race will be held at Como Park Golf Course in St. Paul, Minn., for the 14th consecutive season. The women's 6K race will begin at 2:15 p.m., followed by the men's race, which begins at 3:15 p.m. Saint Mary's University is the host school for 2011 MIAC Cross Country Championships, which welcomes back 10 of the top 15 runners from a year ago.

St. Olaf (2010) and Carleton (2009) have won the last two MIAC titles, and the cross-town rivals are the hands-down favorites to go head-to-head for the 2011 crown as well. The Oles claimed last year's crown thanks largely to a pair of its runners claiming the top two spots, and another wave coming in strong between 15 and 22. The good news for the defending champs? Most of that talent is back.

Defending champion **Maren Westby** returns to try for a second-straight title after winning the 2010 race as a junior with a time of 22:00.7. However, teammate **Emma Lee** was only one second behind Westby at 22:01.7 to result in a thrilling final stretch, and a team title for the Oles. Another Ole, **Sophie Pietrick**, also earned All-MIAC honors with a 15th-place finish and that trio is back to lead St. Olaf again in 2011.

The Oles enter as the MIAC's highest-ranked team, both in the Central Region and in all of Division III. Head Coach **Chris Daymont's** team is ranked No. 1 in the Region and No. 11 in the nation thanks to an impressive run this fall, but Carleton isn't far behind. The Knights are the only other MIAC team in the national rankings at No. 23, and they're currently ranked third in the Central Region. Carleton finished third a year ago after winning the 2009 MIAC title.

The MIAC has three other teams ranked in the Central Region's Top 10, starting with No. 6 St. Thomas, which finished three points ahead of Carleton to claim second place at last year's MIAC meet. The Tommies return two All-MIAC runners to make them a contender again as well. Just behind UST is No. 7 Saint Benedict, which finished sixth at last year's MIAC Championships and enters the 2011 race as one of the teams poised to make a jump in the standings. Gustavus is also in the Central Region Top 10 at No. 8, and the Gusties bring back three All-MIAC performers as they look to improve on last year's fourth-place finish and challenge for a spot in the top three.

Bethel finished fifth a year ago to round out the top five, but the Royals will field almost an entirely new team at this year's conference race. Hamline finished seventh, Concordia was eighth, Macalester finished ninth, Saint Mary's was 10th, St. Catherine finished 11th and Augsburg rounded out the 12-team field in 2010. However a number of teams that finished in the bottom half of the standings have been impressive this fall and could make a leap up at this year's MIAC Championships.

While the race for the team title will certainly be intriguing, it should be complemented nicely Saturday by the battle for the individual championship and All-MIAC honors. The top four runners all return from last year's meet meaning there's certainly strength at the top, and several other runners have improved since last year and could challenge the favorites in 2011 as well. The Top 15 individual finishers earn All-MIAC honors, with places 16-25 receiving Honorable Mention.

While St. Olaf's duo of Westby and Lee are certainly among the favorites again after last year's 1-2 finish, a lot of eyes will also be fixed on Carleton senior **Simone Childs-Walker**, to see if the Knights' star can end her tremendous career with a conference title. Childs-Walker has finished in the top three in each of her first three MIAC Championship appearances, finishing second a sophomore and third as a freshman and a junior. The two-time cross country All-American will no doubt want to go out on top and punctuate a spectacular senior season with another top-three finish or even an individual title. Fellow Carleton senior **Alison Smyth** finished eighth a year ago to earn All-MIAC honors as well, and along with Childs-Walker, she'll be one of the key's to Carleton's championship hopes.

St. Thomas' **Taylor Berg** also returns after finishing fourth behind the three Northfield runners a year ago. Berg earned All-MIAC Honorable Mention honors as a freshman prior to last season's impressive performance, and this season she'll return as one of the



favorites once again. Berg is joined by sophomore **Erin Statz**, who was the top freshman finisher a year ago in 10th place. The talented duo will lead the Tommies, who hope to figure in the title picture with St. Olaf and Carleton again this season.

The other three returning All-MIAC runners all hail from Gustavus as junior **Kate Eggers** finished seventh in 2010, senior **Kim Rostvold** was 11th and junior **Elizabeth Hauer** came in 13th. With another year of experience and last year's great performance to draw from, the Gusties' talented trio will try to lead their team to another top-four finish, or even a leap into the top three.

One new twist at this year's race is a service project headed up by the Bethel cross country teams and Head Coach Jim Timp. The Royals are collecting old running shoes for a non-profit organization called GreenSneakers EcoChallenge for Education. GreenSneakers provides the used shoes to places in the world where people have an otherwise hard time attaining them. There will be bins at Como Park Golf Course Saturday to collect the shoe donations to contribute to this unique and relevant service project.

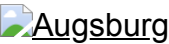
The MIAC Championships will conclude with a short awards ceremony to honor the team and individual champions and All-Conference runners near the clubhouse following the end of the men's race. The MIAC has a Web page dedicated to the event, and complete results, recaps, photos and more will be available on that site following the event. Webcast America will also be offering on-demand video highlights of both races following the event on its [Web site](#).

The MIAC would like to thank Saint Mary's for its effort in hosting this year's meet, Como Park Golf Course, Webcast America and Twin Cities Orthopedics, which will provide on-site athletic training and medical services.

Links:

- 2011 MIAC Cross Country Championships Website
- [2011 MIAC Men's Cross Country Championship Preview](#)
- 2011 MIAC Women's Cross Country Composite Schedule
- [USTFCCCA Division III Cross Country Rankings](#)

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Coach: Dennis Barker (18th season)
2010 Championship Finish: 12th (369 points)

Augsburg Championship Preview

The Augsburg College women's cross country team is looking to make strides up the ladder at the 2011 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference championships. With all five of the team's top finishers from last year's competition back again this season, along with the addition of some talented first-year runners, Augsburg is poised to improve its position in the overall standings this season. The conference meet will be held this Saturday (10/29) at Como Park Golf Course in St. Paul. Action begins at 2 p.m.

Augsburg has seen improvement throughout the season, as five runners recording personal-best 6,000-meter times on Sept. 30 at the Wisconsin-Eau Claire Open.

The Auggies have been led by a veteran group of runners including Kacie Bahr (SR, Brainerd, Minn.) Anika Clark (SO, Lakeville, Minn./Lakeville North) and Haley Diem (JR, Stillwater, Minn.). Diem and Bahr have finished among the team's top three performers in every race this season, while Clark has recorded a top-four team finish in every race this year. Diem has shown significant improvement over her performance a season ago, as her time of 24:34 at the Wisconsin-Eau Claire Open is almost two minutes faster than her season-best time last year. Bahr's time of 24:39 at the same race also marked a personal best performance during her four-year career at Augsburg.

Augsburg newcomer Hannah Ehling (FY, Montevideo, Minn.) has been solid addition to the team this season, as she has posted four top-three team finishes this year, including a season-best time of 25:02 at the Wisconsin-LaCrosse Invitational Oct. 15.

Jennifer Pulscher (SR, Colorado Springs, Colo./Liberty HS) and Shayla Fulford (SO, Perham, Minn.) should also be in contention for Augsburg this weekend, as both runners have shown improvement throughout the season. Pulscher and Fulford posted season-best performances for the Auggies at the Wisconsin-La Crosse meet.

Carissa Miller (JR, Woodbury, Minn.), Emily Knudson (FY, Lake Elmo, Minn./Stillwater HS) and Adrienne Young (JR, Minneapolis, Minn./St. Anthony Village HS), will round out the Augsburg team, and have all shown improvement this season.



Bethel

Coach: Jim Timp (7th season)

2010 Championship Finish: 5th (95 points)

Bethel Championship Preview

Though the Royals slipped from back-to-back second place finishes at the MIAC Championship meet, last year's fifth place finish in the post-Marie Borner era was not altogether disappointing as four runners finished in the top 20. However, all four of those top 20 runners have moved on by way of graduation or otherwise. This year, with only one senior and three juniors on the entire team, the Bethel women's cross country team will have to make youth its strength. Mollie Gillberg (Fr., Coon Rapids, Minn.) is one such example of underclassman leadership this season. Gillberg has been Bethel's top runner in all races she has run in this year, posting a season-best time of 23:30 at the Brooks Invitational in mid-October. On the other end of the experience spectrum, Laura Zwilling (Sr., Roseville, Minn.) has provided excellent senior leadership by placing second among Bethel runners in each of her races this fall. Zwilling was Bethel's fifth place runner last year and has worked hard to pare time off her performances, culminating with a season-best 23:57 at the Brooks Invite - more than 1:20 off her first race of the season. Tera Hereid (So., Coon Rapids, Minn.) has also been steady for the Royals by placing in the top three for Bethel more often than not. A cluster of first and second-year runners look to strengthen the team and add depth, including Rachel Walton (Fr., Wheaton, Ill.), Melody Walton (Fr., Albertville, Minn.), Emily Anderson (So., Mora, Minn.), and Maggie Noble (So., Owatonna, Minn.).



Carleton

Coach: Donna Ricks (19th season)

2010 Championship Finish: 3rd (92 points)

Carleton Championship Preview

The Carleton Women's Cross Country team arrives at the 2011 MIAC championship with high expectations. After finishing third last year the team hopes to recapture the title it won in 2009.

Carleton looks for leadership to a trio of senior runners, two of whom raced at the NCAA Championships last season. The Knights are currently ranked No. 15 in the nation and No. 2 in the Central Region.

Simone Childs-Walker (Sr./Seattle, Wash./Lakeside)—a 10-time All-American, twice in cross country—returns to the MIAC Championships after finishing third overall last year. In fact, she's placed among the top three individuals at the MIAC championships in each of her first three years racing for Carleton. Childs-Walker was named MIAC runner of the week three consecutive times this fall.

The Knights also expect a strong finish from Alison Smyth (Sr., Billings, Mont./Billings West), who earned All-MIAC and All-Region honors last year finishing eighth at the MIAC Championships. She also competed with Childs-Walker at the NCAA Championships and has finished in the top ten individually in three of her four races this season.

Taylor Ffitch (Sr./Portland, Ore./St Mary's Academy) also earned All-MIAC and All-Region honorable mention status last year finishing 21st and 30th respectively.

Head Coach Donna Ricks has led the team to three MIAC titles, 13 top-three finishes in the last 16 seasons at the conference meet, and seven NCAA Championships appearances.



Concordia

Coach: Marv Roeske (13th season)

2010 Championship Finish: 8th (190 points)

Concordia Championship Preview

The biggest drama for the Concordia women's cross country team at the MIAC Championship Meet this year might be which runner will step into the No.1 spotlight. The Cobbers have had four different athletes capture top team honors in the five meets this season. That depth at the top of team could help Concordia improve on their eighth-place finish from last season.

The one repeat No.1 runner for Marv Roeske's crew this season has been senior Caroline McLaughlin (Rosemount, Minn.). McLaughlin was the team's top runner at last year's conference meet where she finished 34th in a time of 24:21.2. McLaughlin was the No.1 runner for CC at the Jamestown Invitational where she captured a third-place finish. She also led the Cobbers at the Roy Griak Invite where she ran took almost a full minute off her time from 2010. McLaughlin has been in the top 3 of the team in all but one competition this season.

The other three team No.1 finishers this year include junior Kasey Petersen (Jr., Grand Rapids, Minn.) and sophomores Morgan Christian (So., Moorhead, Minn.) and Hannah Knickerbocker (So., Stanchfield, Minn./Cambridge-Isanti HS). Petersen, a newcomer to the team in 2011, was 25th at the UMD Pine Hill where she recorded a personal best time. She has been in the top 4 of the team in all but one meet this year. Christian and Knickerbocker have had solid second seasons after being the only two freshmen to compete for the Cobbers at last year's MIAC Meet. Christian showed early promise this year as she was the team's top runner at the MSU Moorhead Invite on Sept. 9 but has competed since. Knickerbocker, who was the top CC freshmen last season, led Concordia in the very first meet of the year at the Valley City Invite. Since then she has been in the top 5 of the team in every meet.

Another runner who could be a factor at the conference meet for the Cobbers is sophomore Paige Rygg (Fargo, N.D./Fargo South HS). Rygg is coming off her best collegiate finish. She placed fifth at the Jamestown Invite and was the team's No.2 runner.



Gustavus

Coach: Dale Bahr (3rd season)

2010 Championship Finish: 4th (93 points)

Gustavus Championship Preview

The Gustavus women's cross country team will compete at the MIAC Championships Friday, Oct. 29 in St. Paul, Minn. looking to improve on last year's fourth place finish. The Gusties have been led by the trio of senior Brooke Beskau, and juniors Kate Eggers and Beth Hauer. Beskau, a Hastings, Minn. native, hasn't finished outside of the top-22 in the last four meets, while Eggers (Montevideo, Minn.) and Hauer (Little Falls, Minn.) have consistently posted times under the 24-minute mark in the 6K races.

Two first-year runners on head coach Dale Bahr's squad who have made a name for themselves include Caitlin Fermoye (Mendota Heights, Minn.) and Rebecca Hare (Albany, Minn.).

Other top runners for the Gusties include seniors Danielle Burgmeier (Plymouth, Minn.), Andi Eglinton (Hastings, Minn.) and Kim Rostvold (Grand Rapids, Minn.), junior Meredith Bache-Wiig (Plymouth, Minn.) and sophomore Lyndsi Schwichtenberg (Owatonna, Minn.).



Hamline

Coach: Paul Schmaedeke (6th season)

2010 Championship Finish: 7th (180 points)

Hamline Championship Preview

The Piper women's team has shown steady improvement during the course of the 2011 season. Head coach Paul Schmaedeke is optimistic there will be more proof of that improvement Saturday at the annual MIAC Meet.

"I think a top six finish is a reasonable goal," he said. If so, that would be one place up from a year ago. The Pipers will send one of their largest rosters ever to the starting line. Sara Holland (Sr., Dousman, Wis.) was 20th in last year's race. "She has had a very steady fall," Schmaedeke said. "She's ready to run better than last year."

HU is hoping for a repeat of some fall race when Maria Theisen (So., Minneapolis, Minn.) battled Holland closely. "Maria can be a top 20 finisher," Schmaedeke said. "If she and Sara can achieve that, we can crack the top six."

To do that, HU needs to get support from Carolyn Bocovich (Jr., Andover, Minn.), who was 52nd last year. "She's been stepping up all year," Schmaedeke said. Emily Smith (Fy., Colorado Springs, Colo.), who has been in the top 5 most of the season and Kaitlyn Frederick (Sr., Paynesville, Minn.), who had a good fall after being in the summer, will need a solid performance for the Pipers to move up. "People often see Cross Country as an individual sport," Schmaedeke said. "I don't think so. If we go at it this Saturday with the attitude, 'My teammate is running well and I don't want to let her down', that all a coach can ask. If that happens, it will be a good afternoon."



Macalester

Coach: Betsy Emerson (2nd season)

2010 Championship Finish: 9th (252 points)

Macalester Championship Preview

Macalester placed ninth out of 12 at last year's conference championships and arrive at this year's meet looking to move up in the standings under second-year head coach Betsy Emerson.

Anna French (Jr., Omaha, Neb. / Central) has emerged as the team's top runner after pacing the Scots at the Roy Griak Invitational (63rd) and Tori Neubauer (53rd), as well as the St. John's Invite (14th), St. Olaf Invite (54th) and Loyola Lakefront (53rd).

Joining French at the top of the lineup are a pair of talented young runners in Emily Bachhuber (Fy., Milwaukee, Wis. / Shorewood) and Anna Schmitz (So., St. Paul, Minn. / Central). Candidates to round out the top-five at the MIAC meet include Becky Kane (So., Milwaukee, Wis. / Auburndale), Lucy Andrews (So., Plymouth, Minn. / Wayzata) and Tess Carley (Jr., Cumberland, Me. / Greely).

"We hope to finish higher than last year, but that's a huge challenge against this competition," reports Coach Emerson. "If everyone puts together a really good race, we can move up."



Saint Benedict

Coach: Robin Balder-Lanoue (15th season)

2010 Championship Finish: 6th (121 points)

Saint Benedict Championship Preview

Strength, Determination, and Desire; three words that describe the 2011 cross country season for the College of Saint Benedict Blazers. Their season started out with a bang, as the Blazers captured two first place team finishes in a row. From there, they continued to build on that strength, proving to a national audience, just how determined and resilient the Blazers can be.

First-year Bailey Drewes, first-year Manon Gammon-Deering, first-year Kathryn Keller-Miller, junior Caitlin Goodman, senior Katy Torchia, and returning MIAC All-Conference athlete senior Kaycee Knutson have led the Blazers this season. Together, they mix experience with desire and have made a winning combination.

Next week presents one of the biggest challenges this season: the MIAC Women's Cross Country Championships. The competition is fierce, and the Blazers are ready for it. With momentum behind them, the College of Saint Benedict is looking to prove to everyone that they deserve to win. One thing's for sure: the Blazers will be tough competition to beat.



St. Catherine

Coach: Michael Henderson (6th season)

2010 Championship Finish: 11th (329 points)

St. Catherine Championship Preview

The 2011 Wildcat cross country team features almost twice the runners as on last season's roster, and with many of those new runners making their presence felt, the 2011 MIAC Championship has a chance to be an exciting one for the squad. Up to 21 runners from just 13 a year ago, the young Wildcat squad has provided plenty of highlights thus far this season. After a strong fifth place showing at the Seven Sisters Championship in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in mid-October, the Wildcats proved they are in championship form and ready for a great race.

The added depth has aided the Wildcats in forming two strong packs of runners in their races this season. The top four has remained steady throughout the year, with junior Jessica Rogers, sophomore Kristina Poss, and first-year athletes Ashlee Bahlmann and Sophie Shogren forming a solid top pack for the Wildcats. All four have added their names to the all-time top times list at St. Kate's.

Another half dozen Wildcats form a solid second pack and any one of that group could emerge as the 5th runner for the team. With all the extra energy injected into the team this season with the influx of new talent, the Wildcats hope to keep moving up in the MIAC and have their best race of the year at the championships.



Saint Mary's

Coach: Ward Berndt (7th season)

2010 Championship Finish: 10th (319 points)

Saint Mary's Championship Preview

When the Saint Mary's University women's cross country team toes the line for the start of the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Championships, coach Ward Berndt can be sure of one thing — his team looks a whole lot different from a year ago.

The Cardinals graduated five of their top seven runners from last year's squad, which placed 10th at the conference championships and 16th at the NCAA Central Regional.

"As a coach, you have to deal with losing people to graduation every year — but this time around, graduation hit us pretty hard," said Berndt. "We lost a lot of experience."

Fortunately for Berndt, graduation didn't leave his cupboard completely bare.

Amy Spitzmueller (New Brighton, Minn.) and Kristen Thelen (Rochester, Minn.) return after stellar freshman campaigns — and have been 1-2 for the Cardinals all season this year — while Lauren Baier (Mount Horeb, Wis.), Regina Quandt (Minneapolis, Minn.), Beth Scott (Rochester, Minn.), Jordan Junker (Glenwood City, Wis.), Shauna Stephens (Norwood, Minn.) and Katherine Mockler (Dubuque, Iowa) are also back.

"We're a pretty young group, but there's a lot of potential, too," said Berndt. "Hopefully we can continue the progress that we've made this season at the conference championships."

ST. OLAF



St. Olaf

Coach: Chris Daymont (31st season)

2010 Championship Finish: 1st (53 points)

St. Olaf Championship Preview

The St. Olaf women's cross country team returns to defend their MIAC team title with all seven of last year's scorers, including Maren Westby and All-American Emma Lee, who finished first and second in the 2010 MIAC Championships.

Sophie Pietrick should also be in the mix after finishing 15th and earning All-MIAC honors last year and being named a MIAC Athlete-of-the-Week this fall.

Also back to strengthen the Oles' lineup are Hannah Dennis, Rachel Dean and Christine Muller. All three finished in the Top 25 and earned All-MIAC Honorable Mention awards in 2010.

St. Olaf enters the MIAC championships ranked 11th in the nation and first in the Central Region by the USTFCCCA. The Oles have won three meets this season and have defeated all but three Division III teams – No. 2 Washington University, No. 5 MIT, and No. 8 Calvin College.



St. Thomas

Coach: Joe Sweeney (32nd season)

2010 Championship Finish: 2nd (89 points)

St. Thomas Championship Preview

It's the 32nd season for head coach Joe Sweeney, who guided his 2010 Tommies to a runner-up finish at conference and sixth-place showing at regionals last fall. Sweeney's athletes also won conference crowns in indoor and outdoor track and field last March and May, respectively.

St. Thomas graduated three-time NCAA meet competitor Allie Metzler, but has only two seniors on its 2011 roster.

Sweeney has two potential NCAA Championship qualifiers this fall in junior Taylor Berg and sophomore Erin Statz. The coach is looking for his younger runners to take a step up at the conference and regional meets to make a run at a team berth to nationals. UST is just out of the top-35 national rankings.

Berg had a strong 2010 season with three first-place finishes, a fourth at the MIAC Championships; an eighth of 186 runners at regionals; and a 53rd-place showing at nationals. This fall, she took 17th in the prestigious U of M Griak Invite; placed sixth at a large meet in Connecticut in 22:43 for 6K; and has two runner-up showings.

Statz was the top freshman finisher in the MIAC (10th) and regional (19th) meets last fall. She also a strong track and field season, highlighted by a third-place finish in the MIAC outdoor 5,000 meters. This fall, she took 15th in the Griak Invite; seventh in Connecticut in a career-best 22:47 for 6K; and has two third-place showings.

Senior Larissa Peyton is back as the team's No. 3 runner after missing 2010 with an injury. Others in the Tommie top 10 include junior transfer Shelby Yoakum; freshmen Kayla Goeman, Laura Hamp and Melissa Engstrom, and sophomores Sarah McNamara and Emily Kindelspire.

Among the newcomers, Yoakum previously competed in 2009 at Division I Hawaii. Hamp was a six-time state participant at Fairmont High, with a 3,200 track best of 11:54 and a 4K CC best of 15:30. Goeman of Hopkins High ran 2:17.3 in the 800 meters and has a prep CC 4K best of 15:35. Melissa Engstrom of Coon Rapids placed 35th at state as a sophomore in 15:20.