

2014 MIAC Women's Cross Country Championship Preview

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2014 MIAC WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS PREVIEW

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- In recent years, the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) Women's Cross Country Championships have been both highly competitive and entertaining. With four nationally-ranked teams headlining another deep, talented field, the 2014 edition should be equally captivating when the teams take to the starting line Saturday at Como Golf Course in St. Paul, Minn.

Not only does Carleton return its 2013 MIAC championship team intact, but Head Coach Donna Ricks and her squad boast a No. 14 national ranking and the No. 1 ranking in the Central Region. The Knights return all seven runners from last season's 18th-place finish at the NCAA Division III Championships and have high hopes to successfully defend their MIAC title, but the competition once again will be stiff.

Carleton's cross-town rival - St. Olaf - was the runner-up a year ago, just 18 points behind the Knights (51-69), and the Oles enter the 2014 MIAC meet with hopes of knocking off their Northfield, Minn., neighbors. St. Olaf is ranked No. 18 in the nation and No. 2 in the region. Both No. 22-ranked Saint Benedict and No. 24-ranked St. Thomas are also ranked in the top four in the region, with the Blazers ranked third and the Tommies at No. 4, and they also hope to be in the championship mix on Saturday. CSB was third a year ago with 115 points, while St. Thomas was seventh (181).

Macalester and Gustavus share the No. 7 ranking in the Central Region to give the MIAC six of the region's top eight teams, and with all on display Saturday at Como Golf Course, the women's race should be particularly entertaining. The Scots were one of the major surprises a year ago, running to a fourth-place finish (136) and Gustavus was fifth in 2013 (155) and is just two years removed from winning the MIAC title.

Hamline finished sixth a year ago - just four points out of the top five with a score of 159, and the Pipers also hope for a strong MIAC showing. Bethel (211) was in eighth last season, St. Catherine (233) was ninth and Concordia (252) took the final spot in the top 10, while Saint Mary's (272) and Augsburg (301) rounded out the 2013 standings.

The Knights' hopes to repeat are bolstered by six runners that earned conference honors a year ago. Colette Celichowski, Winona Rachel and Ruth Steinke finished 5-6-7 a year ago to earn All-MIAC honors, and Kazia Mermel (15th) joined them on the All-MIAC squad. Shira Kaufman (18th) and Laura Nakasaka (23rd) received All-MIAC Honorable Mention honors as well in 2013. This year, Steinke has twice been named MIAC Women's Cross Country Athlete-of-the-Week and Celichowski earned the honor once to continue to fuel the Knights' optimism this fall.

St. Olaf also has a host of talent back, though defending MIAC individual champion Noelle Olson has not competed in recent weeks and likely will not run Saturday. However, teammate Jorden Johnson was the runner-up to Olson a year ago, and returns as one of the individual favorites. The Oles also have high hopes for sophomore Jamie Hoornaert and senior Amy Waananen as they try to run down their rivals.

Saint Benedict hopes for another top-three finish behind the return of All-Conference runner Manon Gammon-Deering and Honorable Mention performer Jenna O'Donnell, along with the addition of talented first-year runner Brooke Rasmussen. St. Thomas hopes to improve on last year's seventh-place finish thanks to the return of 2012 All-American Erin Statz, who missed the 2013 season with an injury, and has earned the MIAC's Athlete-of-the-Week award twice this fall. In addition, the Tommies return all seven of its scorers from a year ago and are excited about newcomer Alex Fossum and track All-American Kayla Goeman.

Macalester could be in line for more success after last year's fourth-place finish with star Kimber Meyer back to lead the way. Meyer has also won the MIAC Athlete-of-the-Week award twice this season, and she'll team up with Mira Ensley-Feld and Sarah Jonanthan to lead the Scots. 2012 MIAC champion Gustavus brings back All-Conference performer Caitlin Fermoye and talented junior Marit Sonnesyn to help the team as it tries to regain its championship pedigree.

Hamline graduated most of its sixth-place lineup from a year ago, so it will count on senior Andrea Haus to continue leading the way, with talented rookies Alyssa Nash and Mariah Gallagher hopeful for impressive MIAC debuts. Bethel will also be led by a promising first-year runner, as Annika Halverson has had a strong rookie season and won 2014's first MIAC Athlete-of-the-Week honor. Seniors Rebecca Wesley and Melody Walton provide leadership and depth for the Royals. St. Catherine will be without injured All-MIAC runner Aliee Larson, but the Wildcats hope to continue their ascent up the standings behind rookie Mariah Stout, sophomore Shannon Strickland and senior Jenna McElroy.



Concordia also has a young, talented nucleus, as sophomore Kaya Baker and first-year Sarah Curran have led the Cobbers throughout the fall season. Saint Mary's star Katie Stolz is back after earning All-MIAC, All-Region and MIAC Elite 22 honors in 2013, and she'll be joined by juniors Allie Thiel and Clare Siska atop the Cardinals lineup. Augsburg senior Kayla Roberge and sophomore Taybri Irving have been the team's top two runners all season, and team up with junior Mary Cornelius to try and help the Auggies improve on last season's finish.

The men's 8K championship race will begin Saturday's meet at 2:15 p.m. and the women's 6k race will follow at 3:15 p.m. Once the results are tabulated and deemed final, a short awards ceremony will follow the conclusion of the men's race on the hillside near the clubhouse. The top 15 runners in each race will be honored as All-Conference selections, with runners finishing in places 16-to-25 receiving All-Conference Honorable Mention. The two team champions will also be honored and awarded their championship plaque.

Spectators are encouraged to attend the event and admission is free. All spectators are reminded to stay out of the runners' way on the course, and no dogs, bikes or artificial noisemakers are allowed on the course.

The MIAC has a [home page](#) for the event, which will be the first place to find results, recaps, photos and more online following the conclusion of the championships. The page also includes course maps for both the men's and women's races, directions to Como Park Golf Course and other helpful links.

Carleton College is serving as the host institution for this year's championship and athletic training services will be provided by MIAC partner Twin Cities Orthopedic. Bethel University will again be collecting used athletic shoes to be redistributed to those in need through the Soles4Souls organization. There will be a collection bin at the MIAC Championships. There will also be a very limited number of MIAC Cross Country Championship shirts available for purchase in the clubhouse.

In addition to the preview, the MIAC also released a [promotional video](#) Wednesday to promote the big race. Fans can stay connected throughout the 2014 MIAC Cross Country Championships on social media through the MIAC's [Facebook](#) page or on [Twitter](#) using the hashtag #MIACXC.

| [2014 MIAC Cross Country Championships Home Page](#) |

2014 MIAC CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS PROMO VIDEO

MIAC WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY LINKS

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TEAM-BY-TEAM PREVIEWS

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AUGSBURG | [Auggies' women's cross country home page](#) |

Head Coach

- Meghan Peyton (Interim, First season)

A Year Ago

- 12th place | 301 points

Runners to Watch

- Kayla Roberge (SR | Team's top runner in all five races this season ... Personal best 23:04.7 at the UW-La Crosse 6K on 10/18)
- Taybri Irving (SO | Team's No. 2 runner in all five races this season ... Personal best 23:22.6 at UW-River Falls 6K on 9/13)
- Mary Cornelius (JR | Personal best 23:12.4 last season ... Season-best 24:25.56 at UW-La Crosse 6K on 10/18)

By the Numbers

- 3: Augsburg women's cross country runners who earned Academic All-MIAC honors in 2013.
- 7: Augsburg's team finish in at the University of Minnesota Roy Griak Invitational on 9/27, Augsburg's best-ever team finish at the event.

Did You Know?

• Head Coach Meghan Peyton is also a professional runner; she joined the Team USA Minnesota training center in 2008 after a four-time All-American career at the University of Iowa. She has finished in the top 11 in various USA distance and cross country championships 18 times since 2009, most recently an 11th-place finish in the women's 10,000-meter run at the 2014 USA Outdoor Track and Field Championships.

Off the Course

• Augsburg earned U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Division III All-Academic Team honors in 2013 with a 3.71 team grade-point average. Kayla Roberge earned individual USTFCCCA All-Academic honors.



BETHEL | [Royals' women's cross country home page](#) |

Head coach

- Jim Timp (10th season)

A Year Ago

- 8th place | 211 points

Runners to Watch

- Annika Halverson (Fr. | MIAC Women's Cross Country Athlete-of-the-Week after winning Augsburg Dual on Aug. 30)
- Rebecca Wesley (Sr. | Personal best 23:43 at Les Duke Invitational)
- Melody Walton (Sr. | Personal best 24:34 at UW-Oshkosh Invitational)
- Emma Blanchard (Sr. | Personal best 24:55 at UW-Oshkosh Invitational)
- Lindsay Johnson (Fr. | Personal best 24:47 at Les Duke Invitational)

By the Numbers

- 6: Freshman Annika Halverson posted the sixth best personal time all-time in Bethel women's cross country history with her 22:16 at the UW-Oshkosh Invitational
- 25:00: All five of Bethel's scoring runners were able to finish in less than 25 minutes at the most recent meet, the UW-Oshkosh Invitational
- 3: Bethel finished third at the Les Duke Invitational hosted by Grinnell (Iowa) College and Annika Halverson finished third individually in the meet.

Did You Know?

• Star freshman Annika Halverson was a part of Wayzata High School's 2013 Nike Cross Nationals championship team. The Wayzata girls broke a seven year winning streak by Fayetteville-Manlius High School from New York to take the high school national championship crown at the meet held in Portland, Oregon.

Off the Course

• Once again the Royals cross country teams are collecting shoes that can be donated to help support the Soles for Souls, a global non-profit institution fighting the devastating impact and perpetuation of poverty. The organization advances its anti-poverty mission by collecting new and used shoes and then distributing them via direct donations to people in need.



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

Head coach

- Donna Ricks (22nd season)

A Year Ago

- MIAC champions | 51 points

In the 2013 NCAA Championships

- 2nd at Regionals
- 18th at NCAA Championships

Runners to Watch

- Colette Celichowski (Sr. | 5th at 2013 MIAC Championships [All-MIAC]; 15th at regionals [All-Region]; 59th at nationals; MIAC Athlete-of-the-Week after winning Les Duke Invitational)
- Ruth Steinke (Jr. | 7th at 2013 MIAC Championships [All-MIAC]; 11th at regions [All-Region]; 88th at nationals; two-time MIAC Athlete-of-the-Week)
- Winona Rachel (So. | 6th at 2013 MIAC Championships [All-MIAC]; 14th at regionals [All-Region]; 96th at nationals)
- Kazia Mermel (So. | 15th at 2013 MIAC Championships [All-MIAC]; 43rd at regionals)
- Sally Donovan (Jr. | 21st at 2013 regionals [All-Region])

By the Numbers

- 5: Over the last decade, the Knights have won five MIAC team titles (2004, 2005, 2009, 2011, and 2013)
- 7: Carleton returns all seven its runners—Celichowski, Steinke, Rachel, Donovan, Mermel, Claire Trujillo '18, and Laura Nakasaka '18—

from last year's entry that finished 18th at the NCAA Championships.

- 14: The Knights are ranked No. 14 in the USTFCCCA's pre-season national poll. Carleton is also listed at the top spot in the central region rankings. This marks the ninth straight year that the Knights have been nationally ranked.

Did You Know?

- The 35-person squad is the largest in recent Carleton women's cross country history.

Off the Course

- For the 21st consecutive season, the Carleton women's cross country team was recognized as an All-Academic team by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association. The Knights posted a 3.62 cumulative grade-point average for the 2013 fall term, the 20th-best figure in the nation and tops among MIAC squads with more than 10 runners.



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

Head coach

- Marv Roeske (16th season)

A Year Ago

- 10th place | 252 points

Runners to Watch

- Kaya Baker (So. | Team's No.1 runner in 2014; won the Crown College Invite; 4 top 20 finishes in 2014)
- Sarah Curran (Fr. | Team's No.2 runner in 2014; finished ninth at Crown Invite; 2 top 10 finishes in 2014)

By the Numbers

- 4: Only four of Concordia's 24 athletes on this year's roster are from outside the state of Minnesota
- 6: Six of the seven runners for the Cobbers at the MIAC Meet will be running in their first conference meet
- 8:30: Concordia competed in its first-ever night meet when they raced at the Augustana Twilight Meet which started at 8:30 p.m.

Did You Know?

- Concordia's No.1 runner Kaya Baker is also a member of the Cobber women's hockey team which has made the MIAC playoffs the last four seasons. Baker had six goals for Concordia in her freshman season last year.

Off the Course

- For the past 13 years Concordia has volunteered with the Itasca State Park and the Park Service doing various conservation projects. This year the Cobbers helped the Department of Natural Resources with maintenance to the trails in the LaSalle Lake State Recreational.



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

Head coach

- Dale Bahr (Sixth season)

A Year Ago

- 5th place | 155 points

Runners to Watch

- Caitlin Fermoye (Sr. Mendota Heights, Minn.) Has led team in past two meets, including the Oct. 18 when she recorded a season best time of 22:43 to finish 19th at the Tori Neubauer Invite...2012 and 2013 All-Conference honoree...Led Gustavus and finished 12th overall at the 2013 MIAC Championships with a time of 23:24.7...2012 NCAA All-Region honoree with a 20th place finish with a time of 23:12.6...Finished 50th overall and second on team at 2013 NCAA Central Region Championships with a time of 23:48.34.
- Marit Sonnesyn (Jr., Plymouth, Minn.) Led team in first three meets...Recorded a personal best time of 23:40 to finish in fourth place at the Central Dutch Invitational on Sept. 6...Finished 44th overall and fourth on team at the 2013 MIAC Championships with a time of 24:24.3.

By the Numbers

- 4: The number of years in a row the Gustavus women's cross country team has finished inside the top five at the MIAC Championships.
- 3.96: The cumulative grade point average of last year's senior Rebecca Hare '14. Graduating with a degree in English, Hare earned a place on the Capital One Academic All-District Team and was later named a third team member of the Capital One Academic All-America Team.
- 3: The number of years in a row a member of the Gustavus women's cross country team has earned Capital One Academic All-America honors. Before Rebecca Hare in 2014, Brooke Beskau '11 received the award in 2012, and Beth Hauer '13 earned the distinction in 2013.

Off the Course

- The Gustavus men's and women's cross country teams have committed to improving their favorite training venue. The Gusties took part in a community service project that will make upgrades and improvements to Seven Mile Creek County Park, a 628 acre park with 10 miles of multi-use trails located off highway 169 between St. Peter and Mankato. The student-athletes will help clear and widen trails, split firewood and fill sandbags to aid washout areas.



HAMLINE | [Pipers' women's cross country home page](#) |

Head coach

- Paul Schmaedeke (30th season)

A Year Ago

- 6th place | 159 points

Runners to Watch

- Andrea Haus (Sr.) Has led HU runners in every race they ran this fall
- Alyssa Nash (Fr.)
- Mariah Gallagher (Fr.)

By the Numbers

- 1: seniors on the HU team
- 3: freshmen on the HU team
- 8: runners on the HU team

Did You Know?

- Haus and sophomore Sarissa Falk are the only returnees from last year's MIAC meet entry.

Off the Course

- Freshman Mariah Gallagher missed the first meet of the year because she was competing in the World Tug of War competition.

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



Head coach

- Betsy Emerson (Fifth season)

A Year Ago

- 4th place | 136 points

In the 2013 NCAA Championships

- Kimber Meyer (FY, Naperville, Ill./North) placed 22nd out of 280 to earn All-American status at the Division III Championships.

Runners to Watch

- Kimber Meyer (Sophomore | Twice named MIAC Athlete-of-the-Week in 2014. Top MIAC finisher in final two meets this season. Ran PR at Tori Neubauer Invite on 10/18. In 2013, 4th at MIAC, 5th at Central Regional, 22nd at Nationals as a FY; All-American)
- Mira Ensley-Field (Sophomore | Consistent number two runner for MAC in 2014. Placed 2nd overall at this year's Falcon Invite hosted by UW-River Falls. Participant of regional team that placed in top 10 in 2013)
- Sarah Jonathan (Junior | Captain, Consistent number three finisher for MAC in recent meets)
- Sarah Jo Devore (Sophomore | Participant of regional team that placed in top 10 in 2013)

By the Numbers

- 4: Last year's 4th place finish in the MIAC was the highest team finish since 1999
- 11: The Macalester women's cross country team brought in 11 first year athletes this season

Did You Know?

- 81 percent of the 32-member team is made up of first and second year runners

Off the Course

- The women's cross-country team has posted the highest team GPA for women's athletic teams at Macalester the last four straight years.

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



Head coach

- Robin Balder-Lanoue (19th season)

A Year Ago

- 3rd place | 115 points

Runners to Watch

- Manon Gammon-Deering (Sr | Took 8th last year at MIAC, has led CSB each meet this season, recorded 2nd-best 6K time in school history this year)
- Jenna O'Donnell (Sr | 24th last year, one of CSB's top finishers all year)
- Brooke Rasmussen (FY | one of CSB's top finishers all year)
- Bailey Drewes (Sr | one of CSB's top finishers all year)
- Cathleen Gross (Jr | one of CSB's top finishers all year)

By the Numbers

- 22: Current ranking in Division III. Highest ranking since 1997.
- 6: Number of top-four team finishes this season.
- 20: Number of individual top-10 finishes this season.

Did You Know?

- Head coach Robin Balder-Lanoue ran the Hood to Coast Relay – a 200-mile race in Oregon – in August and was part of the second-best all-women's team.

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



Head coach

- Shannon Houlihan (Third season)

A Year Ago

- 9th place | 233 points

In the 2013 NCAA Championships

- Ailee Larson competed as an individual at the NCAA Championships

Runners to Watch

- Mariah Stout (Fy. | PR 23:45 at Seven Sisters ranks No. 5 all-time at St. Kate's; three top-15 finishes this season; ninth at UW-River Falls Falcon Invite)
- Shannon Strickland (So. | PR 24:28 at UW-River Falls Falcon Invite ranks No. 15 all-time at St. Kate's; consistently in team's top-five this season)
- Jenna McElroy (Sr. | PR 24:20, 2013; consistently in team's top-five runners this season)
- Courtney Kirkeide (So. | PR 24:36 at UW-River Falls Falcon Invite ranks No. 20 all-time at St. Kate's; consistently in team's top-five runners this season)
- Marie Morrier (Fy. | PR 24:27 at UW-River Falls Falcon Invite ranks No. 11 all-time at St. Kate's; consistently in team's top-five runners this season)

By the Numbers

- 12: The Wildcats posted the best team finish in program history at the University of Minnesota Roy Griak Meet this fall placing 12th.
- 9: At the Wildcats' annual home invite, nine runners turned in 4k PR times.

Did You Know?

- The Wildcats competed at the annual Seven Sisters Championships in Massachusetts at Mount Holyoke College for the fourth-consecutive season. This event began in 1980 for the seven original Seven Sisters women's college to compete in a championship in common sports. It has since expanded to invite other traditional women's institutions.

Off the Course

- The Wildcat cross country team has held the highest cumulative team GPA of all St. Kate's programs for the last two seasons. In 2013-14, the Wildcats posted a 3.67 GPA that earned them USTFCCCA All-Academic Team honors.

SAINT MARY'S | [Cardinals' women's cross country home page](#) |



Head coach

- Ward Berndt (10th season)

A Year Ago

- 11th place | 272 points

Top Performers

- Katie Stolz (5-5, Sr. | Owns school record in 6K with time of 23:14 at 2013 NCAA Central Regional. ... Earned All-MIAC and All-Central Region honors in 2013. ... School record-holder in 3,000 steeplechase)
- Allie Thiel (5-3, Jr. | Second Cardinal runner across finish line at both the MIAC (24:44) and NCAA Central Regional (24:29) a year ago. ... Recorded collegiate-best time of 24:10 at 2013 UW-Eau Claire Invitational)
- Clare Siska (5-5, Jr. | Ran collegiate-best 25:06 6K at 2014 Tori Neubauer Invitational)

By The Numbers

- 1-2-3: Katie Stolz (Forest Lake, Minn.) broke the school's 6K record three times a year ago — starting with a 23:25 at the UW-L Tori Neubauer Invitational, then following that up with 23:23 and 23:14 record-setting times at the MIAC Championships and NCAA Central Regional, respectively.
- 2: Clare Siska has posted her fastest two collegiate 6K times in each of the Cardinals' last two meets, running a 25:09 at the UW-Eau Claire Invitational, and a 25:06 at the Tori Neubauer Invitational.
- 22: Katie Stolz (Forest Lake, Minn.) because the first women's cross country recipient of the MIAC's Elite 22 Award, recognizing the true essence of the student-athlete by honoring the individual who has reached the pinnacle of competition at the conference championship level in his or her sport, while also achieving the highest academic standard among his or her peers.

Did You Know?

- For the first time in his nine-year tenure as the women's cross country coach, Ward Berndt boasted an all-conference and all-region selection in 2013.

Off The Course

- The Saint Mary's women's cross country team boasted four athletes on the Academic All-MIAC Team — Kristen Thelen (Rochester, Minn.), Katie Stolz (Forest Lake, Minn.), Bridget Hayes (Chicago, Ill.) and Allie Thiel (Burr Ridge, Ill.). Stolz also earned USTFCCA All-Academic status, while Amy Spitzmueller (New Brighton, Minn.) was named the 2013 Saint Mary's Outstanding Female Senior.



ST. OLAF | [Oles' women's cross country home page](#) |

Head coach

- Chris Daymont (34th season)

A Year Ago

- 2nd place | 69 points

In the 2013 NCAA Championships

- 26th at NCAA Division III Championships

Runners to Watch

- Jorden Johnson (Sr. | MIAC runner up in 2013... 2x All-MIAC... Was All-America in 2012)
- Jamie Hoornaert (So. | Was Oles' top finisher at AAE Invitational on Oct. 18)
- Amy Waananen (Sr. | Consistently in Oles' top five)
- Piper Bain (So. | Finished 21st at UW-Eau Claire Blugold Invite Oct. 3)

By the Numbers

- 17: St. Olaf has reached the NCAA Division III Championships 17 times, which ranks 7th all-time
- 4: The Oles have finished first or second in the MIAC Championships each of the last four seasons



ST. THOMAS | [Tommies' women's cross country home page](#) |

Head coach|

- Joe Sweeney (35th season)

A Year Ago

- 7th place | 181 points

Runners to Watch

- Erin Statz, SR | 2012 All-America; 2014 MIAC outdoor 10K champ)
- Alex Fossum, SO | 12th at Griak, 28th at LaCrosse; first season of CC in her life)
- Kayla Goeman, SR| Track & Field All-America, 8th 800 m)
- Erin Gapinski, JR |NCAA qualifier 1,500 meters in 2014)
- Kate Mares, JR (40th MIAC in 2013)

By the Numbers

- 10: UST runners in top 70 out of 453 finishers at LaCrosse
- 4: States UST has competed in this fall (South Dakota, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota)
- 7: Toms who broke 24:56 at Sept. 27 Griak race, compared with one who did it in same race in 2013

Did You Know?

- Top-7 runners Alex Fossum (none), Erin Gapinski (none) and Bridget McGivern (one) had a combined one season of high school cross country experience.

Off the Course

- Women's Cross Country's returning runners have a combined grade-point average of 3.59.

[MIAC Women's Cross Country Home Page](#)