

2017 MIAC Women's Cross Country Championship Preview

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NORTHFIELD, Minn. – The 2017 Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) women's cross country season has already produced plenty to talk about and Saturday's Conference Championship meet should be no different.

The 12-team women's 6K will begin at noon on Saturday at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn. This will be the first time since 1992 the MIAC has held its Cross Country Championships at a site other than Como Golf Course in St. Paul, which hosted the Conference meet 30 of the last 35 years.

Once the results are tabulated and deemed final, a short awards ceremony will follow the conclusion of the race. The top 15 runners will be honored as All-Conference selections, with runners finishing in places 16-to-25 receiving All-Conference Honorable Mention. The championship team will also be honored with the presentation of the MIAC Championship plaque.

MIAC cross country seems to have run through Northfield all year, with both Carleton and St. Olaf ranked among the top-15 teams in the nation in the latest Top 35 poll conducted by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA). However, the Conference is stacked with talented packs this season. Six of the 10 programs ranked in the USTFCCCA's Central Region hail from the MIAC, including St. Thomas (ranked 33rd in the nation and fourth in the Region), Gustavus (sixth in the Region), Bethel (seventh in the Region) and Macalester (ninth in the Region). Of course, Augsburg, Concordia, Hamline, Saint Benedict, Saint Mary's and St. Catherine would all like to crack that list as well, and a strong showing at the MIAC Championships would definitely help form a solid case for national consideration.

The Tommies earned their MIAC-leading 16th Conference title last season after placing four runners in the top-12 and five in the top-20. A repeat is certainly not out of the question; however, competition among the usual suspects will be fierce. Carleton has finished in the top two as a team at all but one race this year, while St. Olaf has four top-10 finishes in five scored meets.



FOLLOW THE ACTION

Fans who are not traveling to Northfield will have access to unofficial results soon after the action concludes courtesy of [Fast Finish Results](#).

The MIAC has a championship home page for the event, that will serve as the online home of the meet. The championship page will include results and photos as they become available.

| [Championship Home Page](#) | [Women's Team Results](#) | [Women's Individual Results](#) | [Course Map](#) |

IN THE POLLS

Three MIAC teams are currently ranked nationally in the USTCCCA Top 35, with Carleton at No. 9, St. Olaf at No. 13 and St. Thomas at No. 33.

KEEP AN EYE ON

A few MIAC storylines and runners to keep an eye on heading into Saturday.

Back for More: Five of last year's 15 All-Conference runners return to race this season, including **Mary Naas** (St. Olaf-4th), **Emily Kaegi** (Carleton-5th), **Samantha Schnirring** (Carleton-6th), **Jenny Walz** (St. Thomas-12th), and **Taylor Loth** (Saint Benedict-13th). Nine of the 10 honorable mention All-MIAC runners are also back in 2017, including **Bryony Hawgood** (St. Olaf-16th), **Leighlin Ahlstrom** (St. Catherine-17th), **Meredith Moore** (St. Olaf-18th), **Sadie Klug** (Gustavus-19th), **Sara Ness** (St. Thomas-20th), **Jordan Lutz** (St. Olaf-22nd), **Brianna Gruenberg** (Concordia-23rd), **Marietta Geist** (Carleton-24th) and **Grace Loeslie** (St. Thomas-25th).

How Good is Hawgood: St. Olaf sophomore **Bryony Hawgood** has logged three first-place finishes and five top-10 times for the Oles this season. Hawgood came up two seconds shy of First Team All-Conference honors at last year's meet, an outcome she no doubt figures to remedy on Saturday.

Sophomore Sensation: Carleton's **Meg Mathison** has recorded three consecutive top-five finishes heading into the 2017 MIAC Championships. Not surprisingly, Mathison has been recognized for her impressive showing already, earning a trio of MIAC Athlete of the Week honors during the regular season.

Blazing a Trail: Saint Benedict's **Morgan Pierce** has enjoyed an eventful junior year thus far. Pierce claimed first-place at the Luther All-American Invite to kick off the season, and set a personal best with a 22:51 time at the annual Running of the Cows Invite a few weeks later. The latter was good for fifth-place out of 219 runners and represented the sixth-best time in CSB history.

Welcome Back, Annika: Bethel junior Annika Halverson missed the 2016 MIAC Championships while studying abroad. It did not take long for the 2015 All-American to get re-acclimated, as Halverson finished 10th out of 310 runners and first out of all Division III competitors at the Augustana Twilight to open the fall season.