

Midwest Conference Office  
300 Seward St., Ripon, WI 54971; Phone: (920) 748-8157; Fax: (920) 748-8158



Chris Graham  
Commissioner  
grahamc@midwestconference.org

www.midwestconference.org

Tom Miller  
Interim Sports Information Director  
millert@ripon.edu

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## Midwest Conference Baseball

### *Ripon Favored to Win North, Grinnell and Illinois College Split South*

RIPON, WIS. -- In 2008, St. Norbert claimed its second consecutive Midwest Conference North Division title but again was unable to defend it in the conference tournament as the Green Knights bowed out in the first round. Ripon's bid for a fifth consecutive MWC Championship was also snapped last season in heart-breaking fashion. The Red Hawks needed just one more victory over Knox in the final two games, but the Prairie Fire rattled off their fourth straight win to take the conference crown and the opportunity to compete in the NCAA Tournament.

Once again Ripon and St. Norbert are the North Division favorites as the two teams finished first and second, respectively, in the 2009 MWC Baseball Preseason Coaches Poll. Ripon edged out St. Norbert with three first place votes to St. Norbert's two. Beloit finished third in the voting, followed by Carroll and Lawrence. The only conference coaching change took place in the North Division as Grinnell graduate **Jason Anderson** now heads the Lawrence program.

#### *--2009 MWC Baseball Preseason Coaches Poll--*

##### NORTH DIVISION (1st place votes)

1. Ripon (3)
2. St. Norbert (2)
3. Beloit
4. Carroll
5. Lawrence

##### SOUTH DIVISION (1st place votes)

- t1. Grinnell (2)
- t1. Illinois College (2)
3. Monmouth
4. Knox

#### **--NORTH DIVISION--**

**1. Ripon Red Hawks**                      **2008 Record: 27-10 (12-4 MWC)**  
**Returning All-MWC:** 7 (Beaman, Bullock, Duros, Lloyd, Paul, Whitty, Wierschke)

As you look down Ripon Head Coach **Bob Gillespie's** projected 2009 roster it is hard to find a weakness. The Red Hawks return a conference best seven All-MWC performers including four First-Teamers. The heart

of Gillespie's line-up will likely be occupied by pair of 2008 First-Team All-Conference selections in senior **Alex Duros** and sophomore **Nick Beaman**. Duros is coming off his junior season that saw him tied for the conference lead in RBI's (41), while Beaman aims to repeat his impressive freshman campaign where he totaled 36 RBI's and a team-leading seven home runs. Junior outfielder **Nate Paul** is another threat in the lineup coming off an impressive sophomore showing that earned him First-Team honors as well. Gillespie's pitching staff will be led by senior **Mike Lloyd** and sophomore **Jason Wierschke** who combined for 11 wins for the Red Hawks in 2008.

##### **Top Returning Players:**

Pos.	Player	B-T	Yr.	Stats
IF	Nick Beaman	R-R	So.	.385, 42 R, 36 RBI, 7 HR
DH/C	Alex Duros	R-R	Sr.	.385, 26 R, 41 RBI, 2 HR
OF	Nate Paul	R-R	Jr.	.351, 23 R, 24 RBI, 2 HR
IF	Brett Wegner	R-R	Sr.	.361, 29 R, 20 RBI, 3 HR
P	Mike Lloyd	R-R	Sr.	7-3, 3.23 ERA, 64.0 IP, 35 K
P	Jason Wierschke	R-R	So.	4-0, 3.83 ERA, 42.1 IP, 31 K

#### **2. St. Norbert Green Knights**      **2008 Record: 25-11 (13-3 MWC)** **Returning All-MWC:** 4 (Fuller, Hillesheim, Jandron, Yost)

Defending MWC North Division champion St. Norbert is once again ready to contend for a Conference Tournament berth and possibly another division title. Reigning North Division Coach of the Year **Tom Winske** hopes to fill a hole left by the departure of the 2008 North Division Player of the Year in **Adam Frost**. The talent throughout the Knights roster is still quite evident as Winske returns four All-MWC performers including one of the conference's most dominant pitchers in junior **Trevin Hillesheim**. Hillesheim comes off a sophomore campaign in which he notched a perfect 7-0 record and 3.21 ERA, earning him North Division Pitcher of the Year honors. The Green Knights' bats appear to have plenty of fire power led by junior **Jared Yost**, the returning conference leader in home runs (9) and co-leader in RBI's (41). Along with Yost, senior **Cory Fuller** will lead the St. Norbert offensive attack as he comes off an impressive 2008 that saw him earn a spot on the First-Team All-Conference list.

##### **Top Returning Players:**

Pos.	Player	B-T	Yr.	Stats
IF	Cory Fuller	R-R	Sr.	.373, 42 R, 35 RBI, 2 HR, 15 SB
OF	Jared Yost	R-R	Jr.	.371, 38 R, 41 RBI, 9 HR, 21 SB
2B/P	Tony Jandron	R-R	Jr.	.319, 37 R, 31 RBI, 1 HR 4-3, 4.40 ERA, 47.0 IP, 30 K
IF/P	Mike Wallerich	R-R	Sr.	.306, 28 R, 28 RBI, 4 HR
P	Trevin Hillesheim	R-R	Jr.	7-0, 3.21 ERA, 42.0 IP, 31 K



**3. Beloit Buccaneers** 2008 Record: 18-16 (5-11 MWC)**Returning All-MWC:** 3 (Krajewski, Schmitz, Slubowski)

Although Ripon and St. Norbert appear to be favorites, Beloit Head Coach **Dave DeGeorge** hopes to be back in the thick of things. DeGeorge's team can use the experiences of last year's young squad to improve on its 18-16 finish and potentially eliminate the Buccaneers' 13-year Conference Tournament drought. Beloit will look toward its middle infield to lead the way as juniors **Ryan Schmitz** and **Scott Slubowski** are coming off impressive 2008 seasons.

**Top Returning Players:**

Pos.	Player	B-T	Yr.	Stats
SS/P	Ryan Schmitz	R-R	Jr.	.361, 24 R, 29 RBI, 2 HR
2B	Scott Slubowski	R-R	Jr.	.343, 29 R, 13 RBI, 12 SB
1B	Hunter Nelson	L-L	Jr.	.392, 18 R, 9 Dbls, 1 HR, 14 RBI
P	Rick Krajewski	R-L	Sr.	6-3, 3.70 ERA, 58.1 IP, 24 K
P/OF	Chris Welborn	R-R	Jr.	4-4, 2.77 ERA, 39.0 IP, 37 K

**4. Carroll Pioneers** 2008 Record: 10-21-1 (5-11 MWC)**Returning All-MWC:** 3 (Elliott, Marlin, Simons)

Carroll Head Coach **Jason Kosanke** sees 2009 as another opportunity to climb up the conference ranks and contend for a Conference Tournament berth. Coming off dismal 10-21-1, the Pioneers will look to a pair of infielders to provide a spark for this year's desired turnaround. Senior **Jimmy Marlin**'s offensive consistency will be counted on once again as he lead the conference in both batting average (.443) and OBP (.522) in 2008. **Chris Elliott** will round out the offensive attack as the junior is returning a notable season that earned him All-MWC honors.

**Top Returning Players:**

Pos.	Player	B-T	Yr.	Stats
3B	Jimmy Marlin	R-R	Sr.	.443, 32 R, 30 RBI, 5 HR, 10 Dbls
1B	Chris Elliott	R-R	Jr.	.371, 29 R, 26 RBI, 4 HR, 10 Dbls
IF	George Simons	R-R	So.	.256, 19 R, 12 RBI, 8 Dbls, 7 SB
P	Jason Pattengale	L-R	So.	8.24 ERA, 1-4, 39.1 IP, 26 K

**5. Lawrence Vikings** 2008 Record: 11-18 (5-11 MWC)**Returning All-MWC:** ---

Head Coach **Jason Anderson** hopes to make an immediate impact on the Lawrence baseball program and turn the Vikings into a Conference Contender. The first-year skipper inherits a team that finished 2008 with a 5-11 conference record but showed promise for the future. Junior **Wes Otte** established himself as a consistent offensive threat and will be looked upon to lead an attack that finished in the conference's top five in several categories including home runs, batting average, and on base percentage.

**Top Returning Players:**

Pos.	Player	B-T	Yr.	Stats
OF	Wes Otte	R-R	Jr.	.386, 25 R, 14 RBI, 3 HR, 6 SB
OF	Robert Rashid	L-R	So.	.329, 12 R, 11 RBI, 5 Dbls
SS/2B	Hawk Haiduke	R-R	Sr.	.238, 19 R, 8 RBI, 6 Dbls, 4 SB
P/IF	Andy Frelich	R-R	Jr.	3-3, 5.00 ERA, 45.0 IP, 21 K
P	Alex Fritsch	R-R	Sr.	2-3, 7.58 ERA, 46.1 IP, 21 K

**--SOUTH DIVISION--**

Last year's South Division finished as even as it possibly could have with all four teams tying at a 6-6 conference record. Knox and Monmouth earned their passage into the MWC Tournament by finishing first and second in a single elimination tourney to determine the South Division's representatives. Knox eventually battled its way into the Conference Championship game and defeated Ripon twice to snap the Red Hawks' title streak.

This season's South Division could be just as close of a race with Grinnell and Illinois College being favored as each team received two first place votes in the 2009 MWC Preseason Coaches Poll. Monmouth was picked to finish third while defending conference champion Knox rounds out the South in fourth.

**t1. Grinnell Pioneers** 2008 Record: 16-17 (6-6 MWC)**Returning All-MWC:** 5 (Berdelle, Malewitz, Mendoza, Roder, Takabuki)

Grinnell is one of the favorites for the South Division title as the Pioneers return five All-MWC performers including the South Division Pitcher of the Year in **Rick Berdell**. The senior will anchor a staff that finished in the conference's top five in a number of pitching categories including earned run average, opposing batting average, and strikeouts. Head Coach **Tim Hollibaugh**'s offensive attack may be just as dangerous as it brings back four First-Team All-MWC performers from last year's squad.

**Top Returning Players:**

Pos.	Player	B-T	Yr.	Stats
2B/OF	Chad Takabuki	R-R	Jr.	.378, 28 R, 19 RBI, 5 HR, 19 SB
SS	Ben Mendoza	R-R	Sr.	.315, 21 R, 19 RBI, 15 SB
1B	Brett Maloney	R-R	Sr.	.359, 23 R, 22 RBI, 3 HR
P	Ryan Harris	L-L	Jr.	5-3, 3.99 ERA, 47.1 IP, 31 K
P	Gary Kahn	R-R	Sr.	3-2, 3.60 ERA, 45.0 IP, 29 K
P	Rick Berdell	R-R	Sr.	4-1, 3.51 ERA, 56.1 IP, 46 K

**t1. Illinois College Blueboys** 2008 Record: 18-13-1 (6-6 MWC)**Returning All-MWC:** 4 (Baran, Cripe, Thoele, Wherley)

**Jay Eckhouse**'s Illinois College squad will aim to put itself back in the Conference Tournament in 2009. The Blueboys will rely on experience in the quest for their third MWC crown. The offense will be led by a pair of seniors in **Clint Wherley** and **Adam Baran** both of which are coming off All-Conference seasons. Junior pitcher **David Cripe** will be at the forefront of Eckhouse's pitching staff after putting together a sophomore campaign where he notched four wins in 56.1 innings pitched.

**Top Returning Players:**

Pos.	Player	B-T	Yr.	Stats
IF/P	Clint Wherley	R-R	Sr.	.407, 27 R, 18 Dbls, 24 RBI, 3 HR
OF	Adam Baran	R-R	Sr.	.366, 36 R, 18 RBI, 15 SB
OF	Matt Smederovac	R-R	Jr.	.370, 15 R, 14 RBI, 9 Dbls
P/IF	David Cripe	R-R	Jr.	4-3, 4.15 ERA, 36 K, 56.1 IP
P	Ben Eilerman	R-R	Jr.	2-5, 6.75 ERA, 28 K, 40.0 IP

**3. Monmouth Fighting Scots** 2008 Record: 9-24 (6-6 MWC)**Returning All-MWC:** 1 (Herrin)

Although Monmouth appears to have lost the bulk of its firepower to graduation, 2009 is by no means a rebuilding year for Head Coach **Roger Sander**. The Fighting Scots' consecutive division title streak was snapped last season at seven, but Sander will look to start a new streak in 2009. Monmouth should be in contention once again despite returning only one All-MWC performer in **Billy Herrin**. The sophomore hit .333 for Monmouth and is an excellent defender with a .987 fielding percentage.

**Top Returning Players:**

Pos.	Player	B-T	Yr.	Stats
DH	Billy Herrin	R-R	So.	.333, 21 R, 9 RBI, .987 Fld%
2B/SS	Kevin Sashko	R-R	Sr.	.218, 23 R, 9 RBI, 4 SB
P	Brian Chandler	R-R	Sr.	2-4, 6.23 ERA, 56.1 IP, 35 K
P	Matt Tye	R-R	Sr.	2-3, 8.37 ERA, 47.1 IP, 22 K

**4. Knox Prairie Fire** 2008 Record: 15-25 (6-6 MWC)**Returning All-MWC:** 3 (Almohandis, Davis, Malone)

Despite winning the school's first outright Championship last year, Knox enters 2009 picked to finish fourth in the South Division. Head Coach **Jami Isaacson**'s club aims to repeat last season's result but will need to rely on the consistency of its pitching staff to do so. The Prairie Fire return a trio of pitchers that made significant contributions on last season's squad, including finishing with the conference lead in strikeouts (184).

**Top Returning Players:**

Pos.	Player	B-T	Yr.	Stats
OF	Kevin Malone	L-L	Sr.	.284, 32 R, 19 RBI, 3 HR
3B/SS	Adam Estergard	R-R	Sr.	.244, 18 R, 18 RBI, 1 HR, 7 Dbls
P	Jordan Ball	R-R	So.	1-7, 3.68 ERA, 71.0 IP, 31 K
P	Colin Davis	R-R	So.	4-3, 3.95 ERA, 57.0 IP, 33 K
P	Sammy Almohandis	R-R	Sr.	3-3, 3.71 ERA, 51.0 IP, 48 K

By: Ryan Anderson



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