Concordia-Moorhead Volleyball 2005

A Quick Look at Concordia-Moorhead

Name of School: Concordia College-Moorhead
Location: Moorhead, Minn.
Address: 901 South 8th Street, Moorhead, MN 56562
Founded: 1891
Enrollment: 2814
President: Dr. Pamela Jolicoeur
Athletics Director: Dr. Larry Papenfuss
Senior Women's Administrator: Kerry Norman
Senior Men's Administrator: Bob Nick
Nickname: Cobbers
Colors: Maroon and Gold
Logo: The Chicago “C”
Song: “Stand Up and Cheer”
Arena: Memorial Auditorium (4,500)
Affiliation: NCAA Division III
Conference: Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC)
Official Athletics Website: www.gocobbers.com

History

First Year of Volleyball: 1976
All-Time Record: 435-462-2 (29 seasons)
All-Time MIAC Record: 159-115
Years in Postseason Play: 4
Last Postseason Appearance/Result: L 0-3 vs. UW-Stout (NCAA Regional Semifinal)
All-Time Postseason Record: 4-4
All-Time MIAC Playoff Tournament Record: 5-3
Years in MIAC Tournament/Streak: 4/4

Volleyball Information

2004 Record: 24-4
Home: 10-0
Away: 7-3
Neutral: 7-1
2004 MIAC Record: 9-2
Home: 5-0
Away: 4-2
Lettermen Returning/Lost: 8/6
Starters Returning/Lost: 2/4
Top Returning Players:
Becca Shane: 2004 All-American, All-Region middle hitter
Emily Gilbertson: Led team in digs per game in 2004
Michelle Honek: 144 kills in 2004
Top Players Lost:
Jessica Walden: '04 MIAC MVP; all-time school record holder in asts
Jacki Barten: 4-time All-MIAC; 2-time All-Region; middle hitter
Amy Fitzner: 2-time All-MIAC Tournament; 1000 career digs and kills

Sports Information

Sports Information Director: Jim Cella
Office Phone: 218-299-3194
Cell Phone: 701-371-6359
Fax: 218-299-4189
E-Mail: cella@cord.edu
Mailing Address: 901 South 8th Street, Moorhead, MN 56562
Website: www.gocobbers.com

2005 Schedule

SEPTEMBER
3 at Haverford (PA) Tournament TBA
4 at Haverford (PA) Tournament TBA
6 UM-MORRIS 7:00pm
9 MAYVILLE STATE 7:00pm
14 ST. THOMAS 7:00pm
16 CONCORDIA TOURNAMENT TBA
17 CONCORDIA TOURNAMENT TBA
20 at Augsburg 7:00pm
23 at Carleton 7:00pm
24 at St. Mary's 3:00pm
28 MACALESTER 7:00pm

OCTOBER
1 ALUMNI 1:00pm
5 HAMLINE 7:00pm
7-8 at Iowa/Minnesota Border Battle 4-00pm
7 vs. Buena Vista (at Wartburg, IA) 8:00pm
7 vs. Central (IA) (at Wartburg, IA) 9:00am
8 vs. Cornell (IA) (at Wartburg, IA) 1:00pm
12 at Bethel 7:00pm
14 GUSTAVUS 7:00pm
15 ST. OLAF 3:00pm
19 ST. CATHERINE 7:00pm
26 at St. Ben's 7:00pm

NOVEMBER
1 MIAC PLAYOFFS - 1st Round TBA
3 MIAC PLAYOFFS - Semifinal TBA
5 MIAC PLAYOFFS - Final TBA

Volleyball Staff

Head Coach: Tim Mosser (MO-szur)
Alma Mater/Year: North Dakota State/1986
Overall Career Record: 223-163 (12 seasons)
Career Record: 223-163 (12 seasons)
Overall MIAC Record: 87-46
Phone: 218-299-320
Fax: 218-299-4189
E-Mail: mosser@cord.edu

Assistant Coaches (Alma Mater/ Years at Concordia)
Bob Jones (Chapman – Calif. '86/7th Season)
Allison Kluck (UM Crookston '05/1st Season)

Sports Information
2005 Theme: Staying on course in the high seas at the top of the MIAC.

The reason the Cobbers will duplicate the success of 2003 and 2004: All-American middle hitter Becca Shane, a group of playoff-experienced players who are ready for their turn at the top, and one of the most athletically gifted crew of freshmen in program history.

The reason the Cobbers will fall short of their goal: The loss of four-time All-MIAC middle hitter Jacki Barten, 2004 MIAC MVP Jessica Walden, 1,000 dig and kill performer Amy Fitzner, and all-time service ace leader Kris Sather is just too much to overcome in one year.

Most impressive statistical fact: Concordia has a 12-match winning streak at home entering the 2005 season and has a 21-2 record at home in the past two seasons.

The coach's quote: "We lost a lot of seniors but we have a great incoming freshman class. It is probably one of our best recruiting classes ever. They have a lot of energy and a ton of athleticism to go along with loads of talent. We have depth at every position and that is something we haven’t always had. I am really looking forward to this season.”

The in-depth preview: The tendency in writing a preview of the 2005 Concordia volleyball team would be to use the over-used, rah-rah cliché “We don’t rebuild, we reload.” However, in 2005 that might be exactly the case for the Cobbers as they get set to embark on the first season without the crew of players who started all four years in a Concordia uniform. Lost to graduation were 2004 MIAC Most Valuable Player Jessica Walden, four-time All-MIAC performer Jacki Barten and perhaps the very lifeblood of the team in 1,000 kill and dig all-star Amy Fitzner. Despite this huge blow to the Cobby volleyball ship, head coach Tim Mosser remains optimistic for the prospects of the 2005 voyage. “We might make some mistakes early in the season but in the end, I think we’ll be right in the middle of the title race,” said Mosser.

The biggest reason for the exuberance of Mosser can be found in the 6-2 frame of All-American Becca Shane. Shane has matured into the most feared middle hitter in the conference. She led the team in kills last season with 376 and in her first two seasons of competition has amassed 736 winners. Joining Shane on the frontline will be sophomore two-sport athlete Michelle Honek. Honek progressed slowly in her freshman season in 2004 but finished with a flourish as she recorded double-digit kill totals in three of her last five matches against MIAC opponents. The Shane/Honek tandem will provide a strong hull for the Cobby ship in the beginning of the year. The ability of Concordia to cut through the treacherous waters of the MIAC will depend on how quickly the frontline newcomers figure out the speed of the college game.

Another potential iceberg in the waters could be finding a replacement for all-everything setter Jessica Walden. Walden finished her career as the school’s all-time assist leader and led the Cobbers in assists for four consecutive seasons. Mosser never had to worry about long stretches of sub-par offense because of Walden’s ability to control the tempo of a match and her leadership qualities on the court. Most likely, the job of running the Cobber offense will fall on the shoulders of a first-year player. A quartet of would-be helmsmen have the high school credentials to assume the starting role. Alyssa Dahl was the MVP and captain of the Willmar High School team last year, Jill Hance was the captain and all-conference setter at Benilde–St. Margaret’s High School, while Anna Tinkham was a three-year all-conference performer at Fisher High School and Jen VanBenthuysen was a three-time all-conference player at Prior Lake High School.

Those four will be joined by several other candidates as Mosser will try to find the best fit for the team before the first MIAC match against St. Thomas on September 14.

One of the most hotly contested positional races will be at the libero spot as the team's defensive specialist. Junior captain Emily Gilbertson has the most playing time of all the returning players. Gilbertson led the Cobbers in digs per game in 2004 (4.34/game) and she had the highest dig total in 10 of the team’s matches. She is no stranger to big-match pressure as she led the Cobbers in digs in both matches against regular-season MIAC champion Carleton. Joining Gilbertson as a defensive specialist will be Anna Walden. Walden saw time as starting libero last year and had double-digit dig totals in nine matches. She recorded a season-high 23 digs against Macalester. The third member of the libero battle is sophomore Sarah Zerbe. She saw limited action in 2004, but a year of experience at the college level has helped the athletically-gifted Zerbe develop into a top-flight player.

If the lack of a seasoned setter doesn’t send the Cobbers adrift, then the lack of another power hitter on the frontline might. Lost to graduation were the 887 kills from the threesome of Barten, Fitzner and Kris Sather. Those three were able to take the pressure off of Shane as opposing teams were forced to defend everyone at the net for Concordia and not roll their defensive coverage to just one attacker.

Honek will be used in a more prominent role in the Cobber attack in 2005 as will sophomore right-side hitter Lindsay Sipma. Sipma spent the 2004 season learning from the crew of seniors and should get rid of her match-experience sea legs in a hurry.

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The second-mate role will fall on the shoulders of several newcomers. The good news for captain Mosser is that he has one of the biggest and most physically imposing freshman classes ever. He will have the chance to pull from a trio of six-footers. To go along with the 6-2 Shane, Mosser could cast 6-3 Kristen Hokenstad or 6-1 Abby Scheel or 6-0 Jen Fodstad. The chance to play Hokenstad alongside Shane will give Mosser the opportunity to put a twin tower package on the court for the Cobbers.

Several other first-year Cobbers should see playing time. Mackenzie Close, a 5-11 transfer from MSU-Moorhead, brings the most collegiate experience to the team while freshmen Chelsea Evenstad, Tara Hall, Danielle Norby and Amy Thompson will have the chance to showcase their talents. Evenstad was an All-State player at Yellow Medicine East High School, and Norby earned All-State honors while competing at Windham High School.

**Volleyball News and Notes**

**Previewing the MIAC**

Mosser’s comment on the conference - "I think there will be five or even six very tough teams in the conference this year. I realistically think that if we play well, we can win the conference.”

Once again the MIAC volleyball race will probably come down to the final week of play. Several teams should be in the running from start to finish. Defending champion Carleton, St. Thomas, St. Ben’s and St. Mary’s will once again be at, or near the top of the conference. St. Ben’s was the coaches’ pick to win the conference in their annual preseason poll. St. Thomas and the Cobbers also garnered first place votes in the poll.

**2005 MIAC Preseason Volleyball Coaches Poll**

(First Place Votes in Parentheses)

1. Saint Benedict (6)
2. St. Thomas (2)
3. Concordia (3)
4. Carleton (1)
5. Macalester
6. Saint Mary’s
7. Gustavus
8. Bethel
9. St. Olaf
10. Hamline
11. St. Catherine
12. Augsburg

- Last year the Cobbers were slotted in the top spot and ended up finishing second. In 2003, Concordia was picked to finish fifth and also claimed the runner-up slot.

**Jumping into the Deep End**

Concordia will know right away what the fate of their conference finish will be in 2005. The Cobbers open the 2005 league season with St. Thomas, one of the preseason favorites, at home before setting sail for a three-match road trip that would make the voyage the cast from Gilligan’s Island took look like a paddle boat ride. After starting the MIAC slate at Augsburg, the Cobbers will travel to two-time MIAC champ Carleton on Friday, September 23, and then turn around and play at perennial league power St. Mary’s on Saturday, September 24.

If Concordia can avoid an early-season shipwreck then they could find themselves right back in the title hunt as they finish with three of their final four conference matches at home.

**No Rest for the Wicked**

Once again Mosser has compiled a list of non-conference games to help the Cobbers get back to the top of the league. Concordia will open the season at the Haverford (Pa.) tournament and then come home to face UM-Morris and Mayville State. Besides the annual Concordia Invitational, the Cobbers will look to defend their crown at the Minnesota-Morris and Mayville State. The invitational features the top teams from the MIAC and the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

**Getting Our Props!**

After finishing the 2003 season by winning the MIAC tournament title, advancing to the regional semifinals and then returning all of their starting players, the Cobbers were rewarded at the start of the 2004 campaign by being ranked 24th in the AVCA Division III preseason poll. This year after graduating four seniors, the pundits at the AVCA picked Concordia 15th in their first poll. The Cobbers are one of three MIAC squads who are among the elite in the nation at the start of the season. Carleton and St. Ben’s are the other two conference schools that start the year in the top 25.

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