

University of St. Thomas Profile

The University of St. Thomas was founded in 1885 -- in what was once a farmer's field "far removed from town" -- by Archbishop John Ireland, the third bishop of St. Paul. What began as the St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary -- with 62 students and a faculty of five -- has become Minnesota's largest independent university with several campuses, more than 11,000 students, and more than 400 full-time faculty members.

St. Thomas offers 87 majors as well as pre-professional programs in medicine, dentistry, law and engineering. The 50 graduate programs include five doctorates. A law school opened in the fall of 2001 and a new law school building in downtown Minneapolis opened in 2003.

In its first decade, St. Thomas was a high school, college and seminary; students enrolled in either the classical or theological departments. The classical department remained on the original campus and became the College of St. Thomas. The classical department's first four years became the St. Thomas Military Academy, a high school that remained on the campus until 1965. The first baccalaureate degrees were conferred in 1910. St. Thomas was officially accredited in 1916.

After 92 years of all-male enrollment, UST's student body became coeducational in 1977. Coeducation, new graduate programs, and new campuses have contributed to St. Thomas' rapid growth over the past 30 years. Enrollment has increased from fewer than 2,500 students in 1970 to this fall's approximate total of 11,500 -- half of whom are female. Overall, 14% of St. Thomas students are people of color, and 6% are international students. UST is rated first nationally in the master's institution category with its 800 study-abroad students.

In 1990, the College of St. Thomas became the University of St. Thomas, due to the growth of its graduate-level programs. UST has 10 academic divisions: College of Arts & Sciences; College of Business; Graduate School of Professional Psychology; Graduate Programs in Software Engineering; Programs in Engineering & Technology Management; St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity; School of Education; School of Law; School of Social Work; and School of Continuing Studies.

In addition to its 78-acre campus on the western end of St. Paul's Summit Avenue, the university also offers a wide range of programs at its new campus in downtown Minneapolis, which opened in 1992. It also has campuses in Owatonna, Minn., and Rome, Italy.

Head Coach Dennis Denning, University of St. Thomas

To no one's surprise, Dennis Denning has put St. Thomas baseball on the national map in his 15 seasons as head coach.

Denning is in his 32nd season as a head baseball coach in 2009, including his 15th year at St. Thomas. He's earned a national reputation for excellence as a coach and teacher of young players.

In 2001, Denning guided his Tommie team to the NCAA Division III national championship and was named the ABCA/Rawlings Division III National Coach of the Year.

Besides the NCAA title, he led the Tommies to two other milestones -- in 1999 they became the first Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) team ever to reach the College World Series. And in April 2001, St. Thomas became the first conference team ever to be ranked first nationally.

Under Denning, the Toms are 517-156 overall (.768 win %) and 249-51 in MIAC regular-season games (.830 win %). St. Thomas has made the NCAA playoffs in 14 of Denning's 15 seasons, highlighted by second-place national finishes in both 1999 and 2000, and the 2001 NCAA Division III championship. The 2001 Toms avenged all 10 losses on the season and led Division III in batting at .372.

St. Thomas is a combined 258-29 vs. conference foes in baseball and softball over the last four seasons, 146-4 in softball, 112-25 in baseball. That includes an impressive 35-5 postseason record.

In Denning's first 15 seasons, the Tommies' won-loss record ranks first in Division III. The Toms have won the MIAC post-season tournament seven of the 10 years it's been held. They have 11 firsts, two seconds and two thirds in the conference regular-season standings in Denning's 15-year era.

Denning has had 11 Division III All-Americans in his first 14 years. Four of those honorees have also been selected in the major-league baseball amateur draft. Jake Mauer is coaching in the Twins' minor-league system, and current UST assistant Buzz Hannahan reached Class AAA with the Phillies' organization.

Under Denning, the Toms are 259-53 (.858) in all games vs. MIAC foes. In 150 regular-season conference doubleheaders under Denning, St. Thomas has swept 103 twinbills, split 43 and has been swept itself just four times. The Tommies have won either the MIAC regular-season or post-season title in each of the last 14 seasons, and reached the NCAA playoffs 14 of the last 15 seasons, with seven trips to the region finals.

University of St. Thomas Baseball Notes

WORLD SERIES BOUND: St. Thomas (36-12) won three elimination games in a 24-hour span this weekend to win the Oshkosh regional and advance to the Division III College World Series, set for May 22-26 in Appleton, Wis. Coach Dennis Denning's team won three elimination games with no errors while outscoring UW-Stevens Point and St. Olaf by a 22-2 margin. It will be the Tommies' fourth trip to the national finals, all in the last 11 years. St. Thomas was NCAA runner-up in 1999 and 2000 then broke through to win the national championship in 2001.

PAIRINGS: The Tommies will open play in Appleton in Friday's fourth and final game, scheduled for 7:45 p.m., against Chapman (30-15), which split two Sunday games vs. George Fox to claim the Oregon regional with a 4-1 finish. Chapman was 2003 NCAA champ and is making its fifth consecutive trip to the College World Series.

TRADITION: In the 15-year era of UST head coach Dennis Denning, the Tommies have made 14 trips to the NCAA playoffs. Only Cortland State (15-for-15) has a better resume in that span. The Tommies have won 11 conference regular-season championships and four regional titles since 1995, and won seven of the 10 conference playoff titles contested. They have posted 30-victory seasons 13 times (seven with 35 or more wins). Denning's 517-156 record (.764 win percentage) ranks him first among Division III coaches with five or more seasons.

POSTSEASON: St. Thomas is 67-35 in postseason play in the Denning era, including a 40-21 record in NCAA playoff games since 1998. The Tommies have played in the regional finals seven times and national finals three times.

PITCHING: The Tommies had a 1.74 ERA in a 5-1 run through the Oshkosh regional. That stat includes nine-inning shutout wins by senior Dan Leslie and freshman John Licht; 19 innings of strong pitching in two starts by Matt Schuld, complete-game victories by freshmen Bryce Gapinski and Licht; and five shutout innings in relief by Kris Edwards. The Toms lowered their season ERA to 3.52. UST pitchers allowed a home run in just 11 of 48 games thus far.

ACE: Junior RHP Matt Schuld is 17-3 in 23 career starts. He's 10-1 overall this season and needs one victory to tie a school record for seasons wins. He's 7-0 this season vs. nationally- or regionally ranked St. Scholastica, St. Olaf, UW-Whitewater and UW-Oshkosh. He also beat Division I Minnesota as he allowed three runs in six innings of a 6-3 win. In March 2008, he threw six shutout innings vs. Trinity (Ct.) but allowed two runs in the seventh before leaving in a 7-2 loss. At the 2008 regional, he allowed two runs in 10 innings in an extra-inning loss to UW-Whitewater. He threw 168 pitches in the first 12 innings last week in a 17-inning win over UW-Stevens Point, then came back three days later and threw 120 pitches over seven innings in an elimination-game win over St. Olaf.

FIELDING: St. Thomas led Division III in fielding last season at .976 and is again near the top with another .976 clip. UST went 30-5 last season and is 30-8 this season when they have one or no errors... Second baseman Louie Salmen has had just two errors in 181 defensive chances and first baseman Tom Wippler has only two errors in 388 chances.... The starting outfield of Matt Olson, Matt McQuillan and Brian Schmitz has one error in 196 chances.

NO SLUMPS: St. Thomas' longest losing streak this season was two games. In fact, UST hasn't lost more than two consecutive games in one season since 2000. In that year, UST lost five of its first six games but later was NCAA runner-up.

WHO'S HOT: Junior OF Matt Olson went 9-for-20 in his last five regional games and has reached base in 35 consecutive games (31 with hits)... Sophomore CF Matt McQuillan has reached base in all 10-career NCAA playoff games with 14 hits and 12 runs and a .327 clip... UST is 33-4 when it scores three or more runs and 32-1 when it outhits its opponent... Sophomore Taylor Rahm was named regional tourney MVP after he went 8-for-18 with a game-winning homer in the 17th inning vs. Point and a three-run homer in Saturday's first win over St. Olaf... Senior Brian Schmitz leads in RBI (39), doubles (15), home runs (five), walks (16) and slugging percentage (.581)... Junior Roy Larson leads in hits (59) and total bases (79)... McQuillan leads in runs (39), steals (12) and on-base percentage (.444).

CONFERENCE: In Denning's 15-year era, UST has been at or near the top of the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference standings. The Tommies have 11 titles, three runner-up finishes and one third place. The third-place finish came in 2001, when UST rebounded to win the NCAA title. St. Thomas has a current streak of seven MIAC championships. St. Thomas has qualified for the conference playoffs all 10 years and won seven of those tournaments. Denning's teams have played 150 MIAC doubleheaders, with 103 sweeps and 43 splits while being swept just four times.

UPSET: St. Thomas scored a 6-3 win over Big Ten Conference runner-up Minnesota Gophers on April 28. It was only the second Division III win over a Big Ten baseball team in 11 seasons. It snapped a 0-for-42 streak for MIAC teams against the Gophers since 1987, including an 0-for-16 streak for St. Thomas.

TOUGH WEEK, PART 1: On Sunday May 10, the Tommies needed one victory to claim the championship of the MIAC playoffs but lost 19-1 and 8-0 to conference rival St. Olaf to place second. St. Thomas still received an NCAA at-large playoff berth and was the No. 2-seed in the six-team regional in Oshkosh, but the Sunday losses gave St. Olaf the top seed.

TOUGH WEEK, PART 2: The Tommies came into the regional missing two of their top six pitchers due to medical issues — No. 2 starter Brandon Stone (2.79 ERA in 44 innings) and senior Erik Olson (47 career appearances).

TOUGH WEEK, PART 3: The Tommies faced a tough draw as they opened against No. 5-seed Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and the Tommies trailed 3-0 after five innings. A sixth-inning grand slam by Brian Schmitz gave UST a 4-3 lead, but Point tied the game at 4-4 with a run in the seventh. Ten scoreless innings later, Taylor Rahm ended the longest NCAA Division III playoff game in history with a walk-off homer. Schuld started and pitched 12 innings — one less than the NCAA Division III playoff record for innings pitched set 21 years ago. Kris Edwards pitched five shutout innings and allowed two hits and no walks and struck out nine. Edwards, who missed the last two seasons after surgery, won his first game since May 13, 2006, when he was a freshman at UW-Whitewater.

TOUGH WEEK, PART 4: The Tommies had to face another of the region's best arms in St. Scholastica's Adian Kummet (24-6 career). The game was delayed more than 30 minutes by a freak accident in the bleachers. Tim Leslie, the father of Tommie starting 3B Dan Leslie, fell 10 feet to the concrete when a wooden plank gave way on the top row. He was hospitalized with a concussion and separated shoulder. The game didn't start well and UST trailed 4-0 in the seventh inning. But the Toms erupted for seven runs in the eighth and won 8-4. Freshman Bryce Gapinski allowed two earned runs in the complete-game victory.

TOUGH WEEK, PART 5: Less than 11 hours after the late win over St. Scholastica, the Tommies took to the diamond Friday vs. St. Olaf, but a five-run third inning sent the Oles to a 5-2 victory. Facing elimination later that day, Denning sent freshman John Licht to the mound in a rematch with Stevens Point. Licht, who allowed six earned runs in two innings in his last previous start six days earlier, threw a four-hit shutout with no walks and nine strikeouts.

TOUGH WEEK, PART 6: The Tommies came into Saturday needing two wins over St. Olaf, which had won 16 of 18 games including six consecutive postseason games. St. Olaf had beaten UST three games in a row by a 32-3 margin. The Toms brought back Schuld on two days rest and got seven strong innings out of him as he left with a safe lead in an 11-2 victory.

TOUGH WEEK, PART 7: To cap the comeback from the losers' bracket, the Toms had to beat St. Olaf's rested senior All-American hurler Todd Mathison (27-6 career). In the seven previous 2009 meetings with the Oles, UST was 3-0 with Schuld pitching but 0-4 in the other games. The Toms threw Leslie, whose last start came in May 2007 and had just four innings on the mound the last two seasons. Leslie threw a seven-hit shutout with no walks and the Toms scored a 5-0 victory.