



SOFTBALL

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Softball | 2/9/2018 4:11:00 PM | Shawn D. Smith, Director of Athletic Media Relations

2018 Minnesota Crookston Softball Season Preview



CROOKSTON, Minn. - The University of Minnesota Crookston softball program is officially opening up the 2018 this weekend. The Golden Eagles will look to continue to take the next step forward, something they have done each season since Head Coach [Don Stopa](#) took over the program prior to the start of the 2015 season. Minnesota Crookston has won 23 games in the last two seasons, including tying the school record with 12 victories in 2017.

The Golden Eagles will open the season with 12 dome games. Minnesota Crookston will play four games at the Presentation College Dome in Aberdeen, S.D. and eight at the brand new Minot State dome in Minot, N.D. The Golden Eagles will then embark on their spring trip as they change coasts this year, moving their spring break games from Tucson, Ariz., to Clermont, Fla. Minnesota Crookston will play 11 games at the friendly confines of the Minnesota Crookston Softball Field.

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"I like our depth and we are going to need it in the opening weekend as will be missing three or four players due to illness," said Head Coach [Don Stopa](#). "We have two or three people at every spot that can help us defensively and most are swinging it well too. We will have plenty of options off the bench if we need a pinch hit or need to make a change throughout our games. In the circle, all five pitchers will contribute both as starters and relievers as we are going to mix things up this year and change the looks for opposing hitters."

STAFF

Minnesota Crookston had two big additions to their staff for the 2018 season with the hiring of [Rebecca Arbino](#) as assistant coach and R.T. Cantillo as volunteer assistant coach. Arbino, a former NCAA Division I pitcher at San Diego State University and Texas A&M University, has been instrumental in helping Minnesota Crookston's arms since joining the staff in September. Arbino previously served as an assistant coach at University of Nevada-Las Vegas prior to her arrival at Minnesota Crookston. Cantillo, a former Division I player at University of Mississippi, has helped Stopa with the hitters and has also been instrumental with the fielding.

PITCHERS

- Fr. RHP 11 [Paige Pitlick](#), Jordan, Minn.
- Sr. RHP 15 [Kassidy Klaphake](#), Cold Spring, Minn.
- Sr. RHP 99 [Heather Cunningham](#), Jacksonville, Fla.
- Jr. RHP 8 [Mikayla Jones](#), Huxley, Iowa
- Jr. RHP 22 [Luisa Silvain](#), Tucson, Ariz.

[Paige Pitlick](#), [Kassidy Klaphake](#) and [Heather Cunningham](#) logged a lot of innings in 2017 and the Golden Eagles will look to them to do the same, if not more, in 2018. Pitlick looks to be a day one starter but illness may lead to her staying on campus for the season opening weekend.

"As a staff we may be a little short this weekend, but we still have a staff that can get it done," Stopa said.

[Mikayla Jones](#) stepped up as a freshman in 2016 before missing most of last year to a shoulder injury. She is now healthy, throwing well, and will return to the mix. [Luisa Silvain](#) is a transfer that has the stuff to be successful. She threw 62 innings in a great junior college conference last year so she does have quality experience in the circle.

CATCHER

- Sr. C 6 [Gabriel Antolak](#), Zimmerman, Minn.
- So. C 29 [Samantha Proctor](#), Champlin, Minn.
- Fr. C 9 [Taylor Allen](#), Neepawa, Manitoba
- Fr. C 7 [Julia Lawson](#), Hawley, Minn.
- Fr. C 10 [Amanda Trandem](#), Crookston, Minn.

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"As a four year starter, Antolak has the experience to



Women's Basketball Highlights vs. North Central



11.30.23
Men's Basketball Highlights vs. Concordia-St. Paul

run a college staff and she has been a good mentor for the younger catchers," Stop said. "Proctor really stepped up last year, add the depth and I really feel good behind the plate."

FIRST BASE

Jr. 1B 26 [Maggie Morales](#), Tucson, Ariz.

So. 1B 3 [Rocky Bjorge](#), Prior Lake, Minn.

So. 1B 29 [Samantha Proctor](#), Champlin, Minn.

Last season's primary players at first base both return in [Maggie Morales](#) and [Rocky Bjorge](#). Both play well around the bag and have some pop at the plate, so the hot bat will be the one to log the most time at first. Morales led the team in doubles through 2017 while Bjorge was a leader at the plate early in the 2017 campaign before tailing off late. Proctor has also been working at first as she hit well in 2017 and she may get some time at first to insert her bat into the lineup.

MIDDLE INFIELD

Sr. IF 12 [Jenna Boardman](#), Genoa, Wis.

So. IF 33 [Mikaela Rodriguez](#), Laveen, Ariz.

Jr. IF 13 [Sam Rarick](#), East Grand Forks, Minn.

Fr. IF 2 [Jordan Peterson](#), Lakeville, Minn.

Depth again is the key up the middle. [Jenna Boardman](#) and [Mikaela Rodriguez](#) can both play both sides of the bag and both have middle of the order pop at the plate. Boardman appeared in 43 games last year where she split time at both spots. Rodriguez was an everyday shortstop, as a freshman, at Briar Cliff University where logged 38 games started. Junior [Sam Rarick](#) played well in the fall both at second and at the plate so she adds immediate depth along with freshman [Jordan Peterson](#) who led all Golden Eagle hitters in the fall.

THIRD BASE

Jr. 3B 23 [Maycee Trujillo](#), Sioux Falls, S.D.

Sr. 3B 6 [Gabriel Antolak](#), Zimmerman, Minn.

Jr. 3B 13 [Sam Rarick](#), East Grand Forks, Minn.

Fr. 3B 10 [Amanda Trandem](#), Crookston, Minn.

When she is not catching, Antolak will share time at the hot corner with [Maycee Trujillo](#). The two will anchor the lineup as they have a great deal of power at the plate and play the hot corner as good as anyone in the conference. With the roster being potentially 3-4 players short due to illness on the opening weekend, Rarick will get a start on day one at third where she originally started her Golden Eagle career. Trandem once again adds depth to the position as she played well at third in the fall.

"I think we have what we need to be a very good defensive unit," Stopa said. "This team has worked very hard to better what was a good defensive unit last year."

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Fr. OF 5 [Taylor Airen](#), Neepawa, Manitoba

Jr. OF 3 [Haley Strachan](#), Phoenix, Ariz.

Jr. OF 26 [Maggie Morales](#), Tucson, Ariz.

Fr. UT 17 [Tavia Lawson](#), Hawley, Minn.

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Two everyday outfielders return in [Victoria Bayliss](#) and [Khailyn Neumayer](#). Bayliss led the team in batting average, hits and runs in 2017 and will continue to be a threat near the top of the lineup. Neumayer showed flashes of brilliance late last year, as her bat and defense were very strong through the end of conference play. Allen and transfer [Haley Strachan](#) will also battle for time in the outfield as they both have top of the order speed to go along with Allen's power at the plate. Lawson and Morales will also see time in the outfield with Lawson's athleticism and Morales bat potential.

"I think we have a good mix of speed and experience in the outfield," Stopa said. "Although we will often go with the best offensive contributors on most days, they all can get it done defensively too."

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PLAYERS MENTIONED ▼

#6 Gabriel Antolak

C/3B / 6' 0" / Senior / R

#7 Victoria Bayliss

OF/2B / 5' 1" / Senior / L

#3 Rocky Bjorge

1B / 5' 7" / Sophomore / R

#12 Jenna Boardman

SS/2B / 5' 4" / Senior / L

#99 Heather Cunningham

P / 5' 8" / Senior / R

#8 Mikayla Jones

P / 5' 3" / Junior / R

#15 Kassidy Klaphake

P / 5' 5" / Senior / R

#26 Maggie Morales

1B/OF / 5' 7" / Junior / R

#25 Khailyn Neumayer

OF / 5' 8" / Senior / L

#11 Paige Pitlick

P/1B / 5' 7" / Sophomore / R



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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CROOKSTON

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