

2004 NOTRE DAME BASEBALL

Feb. 27-29, at FAU Doubletree Diamond Classic

BACK ON THE ROAD – The Notre Dame baseball team (2-0) – ranked as high as **10th** in the national polls (by *Collegiate Baseball* magazine) – heads to the other coast this weekend to compete in Florida Atlantic's Doubletree Diamond Classic ... the Irish opened their season last weekend with wins over **San Diego State (7-1)** and **USC (3-1)** at the USC Public Storage Classic, with the final game vs. Louisville rained out ... the FAU Classic schedule includes Notre Dame facing **Winthrop on Friday, Feb. 27 (1:00 p.m.)** and the host **Owls** on Saturday night the **28th (7:00)**, followed by a **Sunday** morning game vs. **Minnesota on the 29th (11:00 a.m.)** ... fans are reminded that the start times for the ND-Winthrop and ND-Minnesota games were moved up from the initial schedule release ... ND also has added a **makeup game on the 28th, vs. Florida Memorial College at 2:00 p.m.** (that game will be played on the FAU auxiliary field, adjacent to the primary FAU Field) ... the Irish have opened with wins over their first two Division I opponents for the first time since 1994 and could post the program's first 3-0 overall start since 1992.

RADIO, LIVE-STATS & HOTLINE – All of Notre Dame's 2004 regular-season and postseason games again will be broadcast by South Bend-based ESPN Radio **1620 AM** (WDND, and its sister station WNDV 1490) ... the broadcasts are available via the internet at www.und.com (College Sports Pass subscription required) ... und.com also provides links to GameTracker livestats on the website's main page, for all home games and select road games (including the FAU Classic, courtesy of fausports.com) ... call the ND Sports **Hotline at 574-631-3000** for schedule and result information for all varsity sports currently in season (from the main menu, select "4" and then select "1" for baseball information).

ELITE FIELD HEADED FOR BOCA RATON – Notre Dame is slated to face a challenging field at this weekend's FAU Classic, with Winthrop (35-22 in 2003), Florida Atlantic (47-16) and Minnesota (40-22) returning large chunks of their 2003 squads that **combined** to post a **122-60 record** (the field's combined '03 record is 167-78, when adding ND's 45-18) ... FAU currently is 10-0 and ranked as high as 12th (in the *Collegiate Baseball* magazine national poll) while Minnesota is 25th in that poll (the Gophers have yet to play in 2004) ... Winthrop – ranked 25th in this week's National Collegiate Baseball Writers poll – is off to a 4-1 start, after narrowly missing a spot in the 2003 NCAA Tournament (FAU and Minnesota both were 2003 NCAA regional teams).

A QUICK LOOK AT THE IRISH (see recap notes from USC Classic later in release) – Notre Dame owns the nation's **No. 6-rated freshman class** (per *Baseball America*) while **returning** the bulk of its offense (each of **top nine hitters, eight of nine position starters**) and several top pitchers from the 2003 squad that **repeated as BIG EAST Tournament champions** (first team to do so since 1986), fashioned a **45-18** record and advanced to the **final of the NCAA Fullerton Regional** ... the pitching staff also is set to welcome back **Grant Johnson** (missed all of '03 due to shoulder injury) but his fellow junior RHP John Axford will miss the '04 campaign after undergoing "Tommy John" reconstructive elbow surgery ... the 14 returning position players combined to make 89% of the offensive starts in '03 while combining for 99% of the stolen bases (83 of 84), 96% of the triples (25 of 26), 90% of the hits (597 of 664) and runs scored (391 of 433), 87% of the walks (178 of 204), and 84% of the home runs (26 of 31) and doubles (97 of 115) ... the 2004 staff's eight returning healthy pitchers (including Johnson, with his '02 stats) combined for a 3.23 ERA and 28-8 record in their previous season with the Irish, with their other combined stats from the past season including two saves, 290 strikeouts, 115 walks and 318 hits allowed in 334 innings ... ND closed 2003 by batting a combined .353 (103-for-292) in eight 2003 postseason games.

PROBABLE PITCHING MATCHUPS

Friday

Notre Dame – junior RHP Chris **Niesel** (Plantation, FL; 6-0/205)

('04: 1.59, 1-0, 5.2 IP, 9 Ks/1 BB, 3 H/.158 ... career: 2.91, 14-1,176.1 IP, 158 Ks/38 BB, 157 H/.234)

vs. Winthrop – sophomore LHP Chase **Edwards** (Chapin, SC; 6-0, 185)

('04: 0.00, 1-0, 2 GP/1 GS, 5.2 IP, 5 Ks, 3 H/.143 ... '03: 4.34, 4-4, 19 GP/12 GS, 74.2 IP, 30 Ks/17 BB, 83 H/.279)

note: Friday's other game is slated to feature FAU senior RHP Matt O'Brien ('04: 1.06, 3-0, 17 IP, 17 Ks/3 BB, 11 H/.183; '03: 2.49, 1-1, 38 Ks) and Minnesota sophomore LHP Glen Perkins ('03: 2.91, 10-2, 105.1 IP, 117 Ks/23 BB, 100 H/.250)

Saturday

Notre Dame – freshman RHP Jess **Stewart** (Manassas, VA; 6-3, 215)

('03 at Osbourn City HS: 1.41, 6-3, SV, 63 P, 90 Ks, 12 BB, 51 H)

vs. Florida Memorial – TBA (look for information on the Lions later in the week)

Notre Dame – sophomore LHP Tom **Thornton** (Middleboro, MA; 6-6/215)

('04: 0.00, 1-0, 6 IP, 4 Ks/2 BB, 4 H/.211 ... '03: 1.81, 5-1, 54.2 IP, 29 Ks/14 BB, 54 H/.269)

vs. FAU – senior LHP Randy Beam (Sarasota, FL; 6-3, 205)

('04: 2.57, 2-0, 21 IP, 19 Ks/2 BB, 18 H/.231 ... '03: 2.39, 13-2, 101.2 IP, 83 Ks/17 BB, 74 H)

note: Minnesota is slated to start junior RHP Josh Krogman (Tommy John surgery in '03; '02: 4.17, 5-4, 58.1 IP, 32 Ks/22 BB, 66 H) in Saturday's other game, vs. Winthrop sophomore RHP Kevin Slowey ('04: 4.80, 0-1, 2 GS, 15 IP, 12 Ks/2 BB, 13 H/.245 ... '03: 4.44, 6-3, 18 GP/9 GS, 93.1 IP, 93 Ks/18 BB, 98 H/.266)

Sunday

Notre Dame – freshman RHP Derik **Olvey** (Pelham, AL, 6-2/205)

('03 at Pelham HS: 1.49, 9-1, 70.2 IP, 93 Ks/11 BB, 36 H)

vs. Minnesota – junior RHP Matt Loberg (Anoka, MN; 6-3, 225)

('03: 5.14, 6-2, 70 IP, 35 Ks/20 BB, 89 H/.321 ... '02: 4.50, 4-3, 40 IP, 30 Ks/8 BB, 53 H)

note: FAU is slated to start freshman RHP Mike Crotta ('04: 3.68, 2-0, 14.2 IP, 16 Ks/4 BB, 17 H/.288) in Sunday's other game, vs. Winthrop senior RHP Jeff Reeves ('04: 6.00, 0-0, 6 IP, 6 Ks/2 BB, 5 H/.227 ... '03 elbow surg.; '02: 3.20, 3-4, 64.2 IP, 71 Ks)

FAR & WIDE – The 11 players listed below as potential starters include three California natives and two each from Florida and Ohio, plus one each from Virginia, Iowa, New York and Colorado.

NOTRE DAME PROBABLE 2004 OPENING-DAY STARTING LINEUP

* indicates lefthander hitter, ** indicates switch hitter

Pos., No., Player	Yr.: Ht./Wt. (Hometown)	Notes
2B #3 STEVE SOLLMANN 2004: .333 (2-6), 2 R, 3 BB, 1-1 SB 2003: .374, 4 HR, 40 RBI, 38-48 SB, 67 R, 16 2B, 25 BB ND career rec. book: .370 (5th), 68 SB (5th), 257 H (7th), 174 R (10th), also 123 RBI, 11 HR, 33 2B, 80 BB/70 K (183 GP/181 GS)	Sr.; 5-11/195 (Cincinnati, OH)	Rated BIG EAST's best defensive 2B, per BA (prep CF) Preseason 1st Team All-American/BIG EAST Player of the Year '03 All-American/Academic All-American (3.38 GPA, mark. major)
CF #6 DANNY DRESSMAN* 2004: .143 (1-7), 2 RBI, R, BB, SF Mitty HS ('03): .402, 8 HR, 40 RBI, 15-15 SB, 21 BB	Fr.; 5-9/175 (San Jose, CA)	One of three CA natives in '04 open.-day lineup (Rizzo, Andres) Hit 4-for-11 in '03 Blue-Gold fall intrasquad (5 R, 3 BB, 2 2B) Parents Chuck and Diane (former ND tennis player) are ND grads
1B #14 MATT EDWARDS 2004: .375 (3-8, 4 RBI, R, HR, 2B, .875 slug, BB, 2 Ks) 2003: .376, 8 HR, 69 RBI, 16 2B, 25 BB, 2 3B, 40 R career: .377, 9 HR, 77 RBI, 18 2B, 29 BB, 2 3B, 44 R (72 GS)	Jr.; 6-2/195 (Mechanicsville, VA)	First Mainieri-era player to homer in first AB of opener '03 honors: 1st team all-BIG EAST, 2nd team all-region Returned to action in '03 after broken leg early in '02 season
C #15 JAVI SANCHEZ 2004: 0-for-6, 3 Ks, SAC, 1 E (CI) 2003: .303, HR, 26 RBI, 42 R, 13 2B, 86% inn. caught career: .279, 135 GP/126 GS, 6 HR, 55 RBI, 20 2B, 92 R, 45 BB/53 K	Sr.; 6-3/205 (Miami, FL)	Prep 2B who started at SS for '02 CWS team; converted to C in '03 '04 team tri-captain with Steve Sollmann, Chris Niesel '03 BIG EAST Tournament MVP, NCAA Regional all-tourn. pick
RF #17 CODY RIZZO 2004: .429 (3-7), 2 R, 2 Ls, 1-1 SB 2003: .314, 4 HR, 38 RBI, 11 2B, 53 R, 11 BB, 58 GP/56 GS	So.; 6-1/200 (Temecula, CA)	Prep soccer/baseball star High school catcher who has developed into stellar defensive OF Set ND record with 28 HBP in '03 (7th in NCAA record book)
DH #36 STEVE ANDRES* 2004: 1-for-3, BB, 2 Ks (vs. SDSU) 2003: .269, 43 GP/29 GS, 4 HR, 22 RBI, 19 BB, 2 2B, 2 3B	So.; 5-10/190 (Napa, CA)	Academic All-America candidate (3.40 GPA, business) 4th-gen. ND student; grandfather William Andres played for ND Former walk-on who sparked ND in '03 opening week
or #12 MATT BRANSFIELD 2004: 2-for-3, K (vs. USC) 2003: .310, 0 HR, 10 RBI (71 AB), 3 2B, 3 BB	So.; 6-1/200 (Englewood, CO)	Academic All-America candidate (3.34 GPA, Coll. Arts & Letters) '03 Blue-Gold fall intrasquad: 4-for-7, 3 BB, 2 HBP, 6 RBI, 2 2B Hit .383 with 12 HR in summer '03 with wood-bat Colorado Sox
3B #5 MATT MACRI 2004: .429 (3-7), RBI, 2B, 4 Ks 2003: .294, 4 HR, 35 RBI, 15 2B, 5 3B, 26 BB, 41 R, 6-9 SB career: .277, 79 GP/78 GS, 5 HR, 49 RBI, 19 2B, 5 3B	Jr.; 6-2/190 (Clive, IA)	Started at SS in 2003 (played 3B in summer of '03) Rated nation's #41 prospect among juniors, per BA (4th IF) Returned in '03 after early-season elbow injury in '02 Summer '03: 7 HR (Cape Cod League, Brewster Whitecaps)
SS #4 GREG LOPEZ 2004: .400 (2-5), 2 R, 2 HBP, 2 Ks, 1-1 SB ... 2003: .250, 0 HR, 26 RBI, 2B, 4 BB, 50 GP/40 GS (most @3B)	So.; 6-0/185 (Upper Arlington, OH)	
LF #13 BRENNAN GROGAN* 2004: 1-for-3, R, SAC (vs. SDSU) ... 2003: .299, 0 HR, 25 RBI, 15-21 SB, 3 2B, 5 3B (56 GP/50 GS)	So.; 6-2/175 (Tequesta, FL)	One of ND's 13 FL natives in Mainieri era (4 on '04 team)
or #9 CRAIG COOPER 2003: .303, 0 HR, 15 RBI, 10-13 SB, 6 2B, 2 3B (46 GP/31 GS)	So.; 6-2/205 (Plainview, NY)	2004: 0-for-3, R, K (vs. USC) Summer '03 (Hays Larks): .337, 24 SB, 38 RBI, 5 HR, 5 3B
OFF THE BENCH (each has yet to play in 2004)		
1B #44 MIKE DURY**	Fr.; 6-5/225 (Indianapolis, IN)	'03 Chatard HS: .420, 10 HR, 37 RBI
2B #8 CHRIS FOURNIER	Fr.; 5-11/200 (Fairfield, CT)	'03 Fairfield HS: .671, 3 HR, 42 RBI, 20 2B, 30 BB
C #11 SEAN GASTON*	Fr.; 6-0/170 (Brownsburg, IN)	'03 Brownsburg HS: .478, 8 HR, 35 R, 8 3B
1B #35 CHRIS VASAMI	Fr.; 6-3/250 (Mamaroneck, NY)	'03 Mamaroneck HS: .540, 8 HR, 30 RBI, 13 2B, 27 BB
C #25 NICK MAINIERI	So.; 5-11/160 (South Bend, IN)	Walk-on addition who was starting QB at St. Joseph's HS

NOTRE DAME PROBABLE STARTING ROTATION

vs. *Winthrop* (2/27; 1:00 p.m.)

RHP #10 CHRIS NIESEL Jr.; 6-0/205 (Plantation, FL)
2004: 1.59, 1-0, 5.2 IP, 9 Ks/1 BB, 3 H/.158
2003: 2.65, 9-1, 15 GS, 3 CG, 98.1 IP, 87 Ks/19 BB, 86 H/.232

His career K-to-walk ratio (4.16) is on pace for ND record
Career: 2.91, 14-1, 176.1 IP, 158 Ks/38 BB, 157 H/.234

vs. *Florida Memorial* (2/28, 2:00 p.m.)

RHP #32 JESS STEWART Fr.; 6-3/215 (Manassas, VA)

'03 Osbourn City HS: 1.41, 6-3, 63 IP, 90 K/12 BB, 51 H

vs. *Florida Atlantic* (2/28, 7:00 p.m.)

LHP #30 TOM THORNTON So.; 6-6/215 (Middleboro, MA)
2004: 0.00, 1-0, UER, 6 IP, 4 Ks/2 BB, 4 H/.211 (vs. USC; BIG EAST Pitcher of Week)
2003: 1.81, 5-1, 15 GP/8 GS, 54.2 IP, 29 Ks/14 BB, 54 H/.269

Served primarily as midweek starter in 2003

vs. *Minnesota* (2/29, 11:00 a.m.)

RHP #20 DERIK OLVEY Fr.; 6-2/205 (Pelham, AL)
2003 at Pelham HS: 1.49, 9-1, 70.2 IP, 93 Ks/11 BB, 36 H

'03 High School All-American; rated nation's #22 fr. Prospect (BA)
Helped '03 team earn No. 3 national ranking

THE BULLPEN

RHP #22 GRANT JOHNSON Jr.; 6-5/215 (Burr Ridge, IL)
2004: 0.00, 1 GP, 2 IP, 2 Ks, BB, 2 H/.250 (vs. SDSU)
2002: 3.46, 9-5, 18 GP/14 GS, 101.1 IP, 86 K/44 BB, 94 H

Has returned to action after missing '03 with shoulder injury
Tossed 1-hitter vs. South Alabama in 2002 NCAAs
'02 Freshman All-American and member of U.S. National Team

LHP #21 JOE THAMAN Sr.; 6-4/210 (St. Louis, MO)
2004: 0.1 IP, groundout (vs. SDSU)

Stellar defensive 1B who started for Irish in '01-'03 seasons
As senior at St. Louis Univ. HS ('00): 3.23, 7-1, 57 Ks/25 BB, 45 IP

RHP #47 RYAN DOHERTY So.; 7-1/220 (Toms River, NJ)
2004: 0.00, save, GP, IP, 2 Ks, BB, HB, 0 H (vs. USC)
2003: 2.20, 2-0, SV, 28.2 IP, 44 K/11 BB, 21 H, .220

23-inning stretch without allowing earned run in '03 (14 GP)

Sum. '03 (Del. OH Cows): 0.46, 3 SV, 28 K/5 BB, 10 H, 19.2 IP

RHP #38 TYLER JONES Jr.; 6-4/205 (Arlington, TX)
2004: 0.00, 1 GP, 1 IP, K, 3 BF (vs. SDSU)
2003: 6.11, 2-1, 12 GP/1 GS, 17.2 IP, 15 Ks/2 BB, 22 H ... career: 5.21, 3-1, SV, 17 GP/2 GS, 27.2 IP, 22 Ks/11 BB, 31 H

Has converted to sidearm delivery for 2004 season
Drafted by Atlanta Braves in 2001 (30th round)

RHP #37 DAN KAPALA Fr.; 6-5/210 (Royal Oak, MI)

'03 Shrine Catholic HS: 1.05, 11-4, 193 K/79 BB, 27 H

RHP #45 JEFF SAMARDZIJA Fr.; 6-5/205 (Valparaiso, IN)

'03 Valparaiso HS: 3.28, 6-3, 50 K/27 BB

LHP #29 CODY WILKINS Sr.; 6-1/225 (Hudson, NC)
2003: 9.00, 3 GP, 4 IP, 5 K, BB, 10 H

Could become first ND baseball letterwinner from North Carolina
career: 9.00, 4 GP, 5 IP, 6 K, 2 BB, 12 H

LHP #33 SCOTT BICKFORD Jr.; 6-5/170 (Owings, MD)

2003: 1 GP, 2 IP, 4 R, 3 BB, 2 K
career: 6.57, 1-0, SV, 12.1 IP, 14 K/4 BB, 14 H

RHP #35 CHRIS VASAMI Fr.; 6-3/250 (Mamaroneck, NY)

'03 Mamaroneck HS: 0.67, 10-1, 120 Ks/20 BB, 34 H, 62 IP

QUICK NOTES ON THE FAU CLASSIC FIELD

• **Winthrop** (see www.winthropeagles.com) – Winthrop is off to a 4-1 start, after opening with a 7-6 win over Maryland, a split with Akron (18-13, 2-3) and wins over Stony Brook (10-6) and Appalachian State (8-1) ... the Eagles returned all nine position starters and 20 of 24 letterwinners from their 2003 team that went 35-22 overall, won the Big South Conference regular-season title but missed out on an NCAA Tournament spot after not winning the Big South Tournament ... Winthrop is batting .314 with a 45-19 scoring edge (9.0 runs/gm), 5 home runs, 32 strikeouts, 26 walks and 9-of-12 stolen bases, plus a .983 fielding pct. (3 errors), a 3.40 staff ERA, a .209 opp. batting avg. and nearly a 4-to-1 pitchers' K-to-walk ratio (47/12) in 45 IP (33 H) ... top '04 hitters have included senior 2B **Matt Matkovich** (.450/9-for-20, 7 RBI, HR, 3 2B), senior 3B **David Scoggin** (.438/7-for-16, 5 RBI, HR, 2 2B), sophomore SS **Matt Repec** (.368, 7-for-19, 5 RBI, HR) and sophomore LF **Jacob Dempsey** (.353/6-for-17, 4 RBI, HR, 3B, 2B, 5 BB) ... top returners from the '03 team included sophomore RF **Daniel Carte** (.340, 13 HR, 65 RBI, 20 2B), Matkovich (.377, 8 HR, 34 RBI, 15 2B), senior 1B **Bennett Stapp** (.274, 8 HR, 37 RBI, 12 2B) and Scoggin (.333, 9 HR, 65 RBI, 12 2B) ... Carte is batting just .227 in '04 (5-for-22, 4 RBI, 2B) while Stapp is hitting 1-for-10.

• **Florida Atlantic** (see www.fausports.com) – The Owls have soared to the best start in their history (10-0), with wins over Florida A&M (7-6, 12-4, 10-4), Bethune-Cookman (9-4), Southern Illinois (14-2, 7-0, 7-2) and George Washington (7-1, 29-1, 7-5) ... FAU is batting .338 with a 109-29 scoring edge (10.9 runs/gm), 12 home runs, a .520 team slugging pct. (5 triples, 18 doubles), more walks than strikeouts (72/49) and 18-of-21 stolen bases ... the FAU staff has similar impressive stats, with a 2.00 ERA, a .215 opp. batting avg. and a 4.5 K-to-walk ratio (90/20) in 90 IP (72 H) ... the Owls have made 16 errors, with a .959 fielding pct. and 5 double plays turned ... top hitters include sophomore OF **Tim Mascia** (.486, 13 RBI, 3 HR, 7 BB), junior 2B **Derek Hutton** (.435, 11 RBI, HR, 3 BB, 4 SB, 15 R), senior OF **Rob Horst** (.429, 14 RBI, 3 HR, 6 BB) and sophomore SS **Alex Fonseca** (.393, 9 RBI, 6 BB) ... top returners from '03 included senior 1B **Rusty Brown** (.368, 66 RBI, 11 HR) and junior OF **Jeff Fiorentino** (.382, 49 RBI, 15 HR).

• **Minnesota** (see www.gophersports.com) – Minnesota has yet to play in 2004 and returns 17 of 24 letterwinners from its 2003 team that went 40-22, won the Big Ten and advanced to the NCAAs (going 1-2 at the Long Beach Regional) ... top returning hitters include senior CF **Sam Steidl** (.367, 33 RBI), sophomore DH/1B **Andy Hunter** (.344, 4 HR, 44 RBI), junior 3B **David Hrcirik** (.324, HR, 29 RBI) and junior C **Jake Elder** (.339, HR, 15 RBI) ... after facing the Irish on Sunday, Minnesota is slated to head down to Coral Gables for a game vs. the Miami Hurricanes on Sunday night (the Gophers were to throw their #4 starter in that game).

NOTES FROM THE USC PUBLIC STORAGE CLASSIC

• **Thornton Pitcher Of The Week** – ND sophomore LHP **Tom Thornton** (Middleboro, Mass.) received BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week honors in recognition of his primetime performance vs. **#20 USC (6 IP, UER, 4 H, 2 BB, 4 Ks; 3-1)** ... Thornton allowed 2-of-6 leadoff batters to reach but held USC to 1-for-6 batting with runners on base ... the USC lefthanders combined to hit just 1-for-5 vs. the 6-6, 215-pound southpaw ... Thornton located 46 of his 81 pitches for strikes (57%), with three Ks on called third strikes.

• Thornton's outing vs. USC ranks among the **top opening-week performances** in the 10-year Paul Mainieri era ... RHP **Scott Cavey** is the only other Mainieri-era pitcher to not allow an earned run in 6-plus innings of work during the first week of action (Cavey did so as a senior in '00, in a 6-0 win vs. Air Force in Millington, Tenn.) ... others of note include sophomore RHP Alex Shilliday's 5 shutout innings vs. Florida State ('98, in Orlando) and three others who tossed 4 innings without an earned run.

• Thornton is the 10th Irish player (first LHP) to receive a BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week honor, since ND joined the BIG EAST in the '95-'96 ... Notre Dame has produced **24 BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week recipients** in the last nine years, the most from any of the league's schools during that stretch (Rutgers is next with 21, followed by West Virginia's 16 and 10 from St. John's) ... ND's previous BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week recipients include 10-time honoree Aaron **Heilman**, from '98-'01 (no other BIG EAST pitcher ever has totaled more than four) ... two other ND pitchers – Scott **Cavey** ('97-'00) and Danny **Tamayo** ('98, '00-'01) – are tied for fourth on the BIG EAST list with three career BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week awards while current junior Chris **Niesel** and recent starter/closer specialist J.P. **Gagne** ('00-'03) each own two BIG EAST weekly awards ... the other four Notre Dame pitchers who have received weekly BIG EAST honors include Christian **Parker** ('96), Brad **Lidge** ('98), Alex **Shilliday** ('98) and Peter **Ogilvie** ('02).

• Junior RHP **Chris Niesel** (Plantation, FL) posted his **10th straight winning decision** with ND in the 7-1 win over SDSU ... Niesel extended his record with the Irish to **14-1** while lowering his career ERA to **2.91** ... the staff ace posted **9 strikeouts for the 6th time** in his Irish career (to go along with two double-digit K games) while scattering three hits and one walk over 5.2 innings ... since suffering the only loss of his ND career (7-1 vs. Nebraska, on Feb. 28, 2003, at the Minnesota Metrodome), Niesel has dominated to the tune of a **1.92 ERA and 10-0 record in his last 14 starts** with the Irish ... he owns a 5.2 K-to-walk ratio in that span (**93 Ks/18 BB, in 94.0 IP**), allowing just **74 hits and .215** opponent batting in those 14 games (9-inning averages of 8.9 Ks, 1.7 BB, 7.1 H).

• **Matt Edwards** (Mechanicsville, Va.) **homered in his first at-bat** of the season en route to one of the top opening-day performances by an Irish hitter in the last 10 years ... Edwards became the sixth player in the 10-year Mainieri era to hit a home run in the season opener (his ninth HR in 73 games with the Irish) ... no previous Mainieri-era player had homered in his first at-bat of a season opener - and Edwards was far from done, adding a two-run single in the 5th before scorching a double in the 7th ... his **4 RBI** are **most in a Mainieri-era opener** while Edwards' 3-for-5 day shy of Steve Sollmann's '01 effort vs. New Orleans (4-for-5, at Mississippi State) as the top opening-day hit total in the Mainieri era.

• Notre Dame improved to **6-1 in its last seven season openers**, 12-7-1 in California during the Mainieri era and 73-26-1 in regular-season tournaments since '95 ... the Irish also have posted a winning or even record in 16 of their last 18 regular-season tournaments ... the win over SDSU was the 400th for the Irish during 10 seasons under head coach **Paul Mainieri**, who now owns a **401-160-1** record at Notre Dame (.714) ... the 400th win came just **140 games after the 300th** win of the Mainieri era.

• Just **three Notre Dame teams in the previous 30 seasons** had registered a **more comfortable margin in a season opener** (7-1) ... the '89 team opened with a 12-2 win over Trinity while the '98 squad beat Florida State 10-1 in the opener (in Orlando).

• The SDSU game featured two noteworthy relief appearances for the Irish ... senior LHP **Joe Thaman** – ND's starting 1B in the '01-'03 seasons – came on to get the final out in the 6th, with the St. Louis native serving up a soft grounder to strand two runners ... junior RHP **Grant Johnson** (Burr Ridge, Ill.) – who missed all of the '03 season while recovering from shoulder surgery, after a Freshman All-America season in '02 – added shutout innings in the 7th and 8th (2 H, BB, 2 Ks).

• Senior 2B **Steve Sollmann** had a strong debut from his customary leadoff spot, batting 2-for-3 with a pair of walks and two runs scored ... the Cincinnati native – who has hit a combined **9-for-16 (.563) in four season openers** with the Irish – pushed his **career hit** total to **257**, tying fellow All-American Dan Peltier ('87-'89) for 7th in the Notre Dame record book.

• San Diego State became the **280th all-time opponent** in 112 seasons of Notre Dame baseball (the Irish are **14-2 in their last 16** games when **facing a first-time opponent**, dating back to 2000).

• The Irish **avoided an 0-and-2 start for the 19th time in last 20** regular-season tournaments (ND has gone 0-and-2 at a regular-season tournament just three times under Mainieri and has not gone 0-and-2 at a postseason tournament since 1960).

• **Niesel's 27 career starts** with the Irish include allowing just **two earned runs** (the equivalent of a 0.67 ERA, with both runs by CS Fullerton in the '03 NCAAAs), plus **32 Ks, 5 BB** (6.4 K/BB ratio), **21 hits** allowed and .208 opp. batting in **1st inning** of his ND career.

• In the win over USC, Notre Dame put 13 men on base but failed to produce a big inning, with junior 3B **Matt Macri** (Clive, Iowa) providing the only Irish RBI on a double in the 5th.

• The ND pitchers combined for a 0.56 ERA, totaling 18 Ks and only 5 walks while allowing just 9 hits (.170 opp. avg.) in 16 inning ... the 0.56 ERA blows away the program's previous best during an opening weekend (2.05 in 2000, to go along with a .241 opponent batting avg. that was bested by last weekend's .170, also tops in the Mainieri era) ... in fact, the opponent slugging pct. from last weekend's action (.208) even is lower than that 2000 opponent batting (the '01 staff allowed .292 slugging in opening week).

• Notre Dame's .310 team batting average in the wins over SDSU and USC represents the team's 3rd-best opening-week batting average in the 10-year Mainieri era (the '03 team opened by batting .367 and the '95 squad .352).

• ND – coming off a record .970 season fielding pct. in '03 – played error-free on customary fielding (only E on catcher's interference, vs. USC) ... the resulting .985 fielding pct. is the best opening-week effort by a Mainieri-era squad (besting the .971/3 Es in '00).

• Sophomore RF **Cody Rizzo** now is a .533 career hitter with the Irish during opening-week games (8-for-15) while sophomore SS **Greg Lopez** has hit a combined 5-for-13 (.385) in opening-week action with the Irish.

• The Irish are nearing a +100 record during the past four seasons (146-49-1) and will be looking to post the program's first 3-0 start since 1992, with Notre Dame typically facing several warm-weather schools at the start of each season.

SERIES NOTES

• **WINTHROP AND FLORIDA MEMORIAL SET TO BECOME OPPONENTS #281, #282** – Notre Dame has faced 280 different opponents in 112 seasons of Division I baseball, with Winthrop and Florida Memorial set to join that list this week ... another upcoming opponent, Texas Tech, is among the more noteworthy teams not on ND's all-time opponent list (as is Oklahoma State) ... the Irish are **14-2 in their last 16 games vs. first-time opponents** (including last week's 7-1 win over San Diego State), dating back to a win over Akron in 2000 ... recent losses to first-time opponents have been to South Florida ('01) and Jacksonville ('03), with other recent wins over first-time opponents Florida Atlantic ('00), New Mexico, Pacific, Sam Houston State and UC Santa Barbara (all in 2001), Fairfield, Sacred Heart, Arkansas-Little Rock, Rochester College and Rice (all in '02) and '03 opponents Newman and IPFW during that stretch.

• **ND-FAU (1-0)** – Notre Dame's **3-0 win over Florida Atlantic at the 2001 Devil Rays Invitational** (at Florida Power Park, in St. Petersburg) – the only series meeting – is part of ND's current 14-2 streak in its last 16 games vs. a first-time opponent ... then-senior RHP Aaron **Heilman** (5 H, BB, 9 Ks, 110 pitches) tossed the first 9-inning shutout of his All-America career while the ND offense came through with the clutch plays to beat FAU ace Petersen **Benjamin** (9 IP, 10 H, 0 BB, 4 Ks) ... ND was ranked 10th prior to that game and later rose to No. 1 ... senior C Rob **Orton** (0-for-3) is the only current FAU player who played in the '01 game vs. ND, with two Irish players who played in that game still on the ND roster: senior 2B Steve **Sollmann** (0-for-3) and senior LHP/1B Joe **Thaman** (2-for-3, R) ... after working out of a 5th-inning jam (runners on 1st and 2nd, no outs; double play/popup), Heilman retired 13 of the next 14 batters before Sollmann's fielding error with two outs in the 9th ... ND played without injured RF and leading hitter Brian **Stavisky** ... the quickly-moving game lasted just two hours ... Heilman let just six balls leave the infield ... ND scored twice in the 4th, after singles from Steve **Stanley**, Alec **Porzel**, Paul **O'Toole** and Kris **Billmaier** ... Thaman singled and scored on Orton's passed ball in the 7th ...

• **ND-MINNESOTA (22-18)** – Notre Dame holds a 22-18 series edge vs. Minnesota, with the Gophers winning the last three meetings at their Metrodome tournament (9-5 in '91, 9-7 in '00, 8-2 in '03) ... that loss in '03 handed ND its only 0-2 start in the last 20 regular-season tournaments (the Irish lost earlier to Nebraska, 7-1) ... in the '03 game, Minnesota senior RHP CJ **Woodrow** retired the first 14 batters en route to the win (6 IP, UER, 4 H, 8 Ks) while LHP Brian **Bull** picked up the save (3 IP, UER, 2 H, BB, K) ... senior RHPs Peter **Ogilvie** (4 IP, 5 R, 6 H, 2 BB, 3 Ks) and Ryan **Kalita** (3.1 IP, 3 R, 6 H, 3 BB) pitched for the Irish ... the Gophers' offensive leaders included 2B Luke **Appert** (3 RBI, 2-run hr), SS Scott **Welch** (2 2B) and 3B David **Hrncirik** (3-for-3, 3 RBI, 2B) ... junior C Javi **Sanchez** (2 H) broke up Woodrow's perfect start with a 5th-inning single through the left side ... ND plated a run in the 6th, after freshman LF Brennan **Grogan** legged out an infield single, stole second, advanced on Hrncirik's two-out fielding error and scored on a single off the rightfield wall by sophomore 3B Matt Edwards ... a Sanchez single and two-base fielding error later preceded Matt's Macri's RBI groundout in the 7th ... ND junior 2B Steve **Sollmann** had not struck out in his previous 16 games with the Irish before suffering a rare 2-K game vs. Minnesota in '03 ... the ND-Minnesota series dates back to 1894 (third season of varsity baseball at Notre Dame), with the teams playing 19 times from 1894-1909, then six times in the 1920s (pair of games in both 1949 and '50) ... the next seven games of the series came in the NAAs, with the Gophers besting the Irish in a 1956 three-game NCAA series at UM (3-4, 15-5, 10-1) while the Irish posted NCAA wins over the Gophers in 1958 (11-7, at Western Michigan) and 1959 (12-4, at ND) ... Minnesota then posted a 15-6 win over ND in the 1960 NAAs, with the Irish notching a 6-2 win over the Gophers in 1970 NCAA action (at Ohio State).

THREE-YEAR TEAR – Notre Dame racked up a **144-49-1 record during the '01-'03 seasons** (49-13-1 in '01, 50-18 in '02, 45-18 in '03), with **only four teams totaling more wins** over that three-year span: Florida State (161), Rice (157), South Carolina (151) and Stanford (149).

PRESEASON RESPECT – Notre Dame is **one of seven** teams that have been in the **Baseball America preseason top-20** every season **since 2000** ... the others include Rice, LSU, Cal State Fullerton, Georgia Tech, Stanford and Baylor ... Notre Dame checked in at 20th in BA's 2000 preseason poll, followed by 9th in 2001, 5th in '02 and 12th in '03.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MORE (OUTDOOR) PRACTICE! – On the day prior to last week's season-opener vs. San Diego State, Notre Dame spent several hours at USC's Dedeaux Field, playing a simulated scrimmage while taking advantage of the team's first outdoor workouts of '04 ... ND's current 6-1 streak in season openers was sparked by the first season ('98, with the 10-1 win over Florida State) of the Mainieri era in which the Irish opted to use a missed-class-day (one of six total allowed per season) for a practice day leading into the opener ... fittingly, the only season since '98 in which the Irish have not used the practice day led to the 7-6 loss vs. New Orleans in 2001 ... the Irish have an early flight on Thursday this week and will gain a valuable practice on Thursday (late afternoon/early evening) at Florida Atlantic Field (ND and FAU will play a night game on Feb. 28).

QUALITY ROAD WINS – Last week's 3-1 win over USC gave the Irish another win over a top-25 team on its home field (USC was 20th in the *Collegiate Baseball* magazine poll and 23rd in the *USA Today* coaches poll) ... previous Notre Dame teams have posted noteworthy wins over homestanding traditional powers such as Miami, Florida State, LSU, Texas, Clemson and Mississippi State (all since 1989) ... one difference in the win over USC was that ND was the higher-ranked team ... another chance for a quality road win awaits on Saturday at Florida Atlantic (the Owls are ranked as high as 12th).

FRIEND OR FOE? – Notre Dame sophomore LF **Brennan Grogan** and Florida Atlantic sophomore RHP **Will Mann** are former winter-league teammates.

BACK TO CALI – ND's opening-day lineup featured all three of the California natives on the '04 roster: sophomore RF **Cody Rizzo** (Temecula/Chaparral HS), sophomore DH **Steve Andres** (Napa/Siena HS) and freshman CF **Danny Dressman** (San Jose/Mitty HS).

FAMILIAR CLIMATE – Notre Dame started its 2004 season in a familiar part of the country (at the USC Classic), as the final games of ND's 2003 season were played at nearby Cal State Fullerton in the 2003 NAAs ... the 2001 Irish team made a true return in its season-opening trip, starting that '01 season at the Mississippi State Classic (the 2000 team lost to the host Bulldogs in the title game of the '00 NCAA Starkville Regional).

SUNSHINE STATE SITES – Notre Dame's trip to Boca Raton for the FAU Classic will represent the **10th different Florida site** visited by the Irish in the program's history ... the Notre Dame baseball team has made regular visits to Florida, totaling a 41-40-1 record (**19-11-0** in the Paul **Mainieri era**) vs. various top teams at games played in DeLand, Gainesville, Homestead, Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, St. Petersburg, Tallahassee and Winter Park (plus the '04 tournament in Boca Raton) ... since 1957, Notre Dame has played in 34 different states (plus Washington, D.C.) and 116 cities (including 2004 trips).

ND IN FLORIDA RESULTS – In addition to participating in Jacksonville at the 2000 (7-1) and 2003 (6-1) Kennel Club Classics, the Irish recently have played three series at Miami (1-2 in '92 and '95, 0-3 in '98) while participating in the first ACC/Disney Blast in Orlando ('98; 1-2 with win over FSU) ... ND nearly advanced to the 1992 and '93 College World Series, after competing in NCAA regionals at Miami and Florida State (the Irish upset the host schools and advanced to the final day of competition in both '92 and '93) – with the '02 team winning an NCAA Super Regional series at Florida State to earn a College World Series spot (Florida native Chris Niesel picked up the decisive win over FSU) ... other Mainieri-era trips to Florida include the 2001 Devil Rays Invitational (lost to USF, beat FAU) and the 2002 Homestead Invitational (3-1, loss to FIU) ... the program's first Florida trip came in 1956 (2-5 in games around Tallahassee area), plus a 5-2 loss at FSU in 1958, three wins at Rollins in '67, tournaments at Miami in '70 (1-5) and Rollins in '78 (3-5-1), seven games around the state in '79 (2-5) and six games played at Rollins and Miami in '89 (4-2).

SOUTH FLORIDA CAPTAINS – Notre Dame's 2004 squad includes two of three team captains who hail from south Florida: senior C **Javi Sanchez** (Miami/Columbus HS) and junior RHP **Chris Niesel** (Plantation/Aquinas HS) ... it marks the first time that multiple Florida natives have served as captains of a Notre Dame baseball squad ... in fact, just two previous Florida natives ever have served as ND baseball captains: IF **Joe LaRocca** (Ft. Lauderdale/Gibbons HS) in '72 and OF **Henry Valenzuela** (Tampa/Jesuit HS) in '82.

FLORIDA NATIVES – The 2004 Notre Dame baseball roster includes players from 19 states, with four from Florida: senior C **Javi Sanchez** (Miami/Columbus HS), junior RHP **Chris Niesel** (Plantation/Aquinas HS), sophomore LF **Brennan Grogan** (Tequesta/Benjamin School) and freshman LHP **Matt Whittington** (Melbourne/Melbourne Central Catholic) – plus head coach Paul Mainieri (Miami/Columbus HS) ... Florida joins Illinois and Indiana as the most-represented home states among ND's 37-player 2004 roster (each with four, followed by three each from California and New York) ... Mainieri's father, **Demie "Doc" Mainieri**, had a 30-year Hall-of-Fame coaching career at Miami Dade North Junior College (he coached the likes of Mike Piazza, Steve Carlton, Bucky Dent, Mickey Rivers, Oddibe McDowell, Warren Cromartie and Steve Cangelosi) ... the ND baseball program's list of all-time monogram winners includes 16 Florida natives, with Niesel joining other noteworthy RHPs such as **Mike Pasilla** (Windemere/Bishop Moore HS; '87-'89, 4.85 career ERA, 17-11 record, 200.1 innings), **David Sinnes** (Miami/Palmetto HS; '90-'93, 2.91, 32-8, 315 Ks in 297.1 IP), closer **John Corbin** (Hollywood Hills HS; '98-'00, 4.64, 13-7, 20 saves, 112 Ks in 114.1) and **Danny Tamayo** (Miami/ransom Everglades HS; '98-'01, 3.27, 12-5, 141 Ks in 160.0) ... Sinnes held ND records for career win pct. and Ks (bested by Aaron Heilman in '01) while Corbin is the Irish career saves leader and Tamayo formed a potent 1-2 punch with Heilman in '01 ... other noteworthy ND players from Florida have included: SS **Daniel Cunha** (St. Petersburg; '33-'35), IF **Joe LaRocca** (Ft. Lauderdale/Gibbons HS; '70-'72) OF **Mike Galloway** (Cocoa Beach HS; '75-'77), 1B **Henry Valenzuela** (Tampa/Jesuit HS; '79-'82) and DH **Ken Meyer** (Ft. Myers/Bishop Verot HS; '99-'02).

TOURNAMENT-TOUGH – Notre Dame is **73-26-1 (.735) in regular-season tournaments during the Paul Mainieri era**, highlighted by a 1998 win over Florida State, wins in 2000 over Wake Forest, Georgia and Illinois (2), 2001 wins over Mississippi State (2), Fresno State and Illinois, another win over Wake Forest in 2003, and last week's win at USC ... the Irish have not had a losing record in 16 of their last 18 regular-season tournaments (52-14-1 record in those events), dating back to a 1-2 showing at the ACC Disney Blast early in 1998 ... here are the regular-season tournaments during the Mainieri era:

'95 – Anaheim Classic (at CS Fullerton, 1-2) ... College Baseball Classic (Seattle, 3-0) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 2-2)
'96 – Service Academies Classic (Millington, TN; 3-1) ... Husky Classic (Seattle, 2-1) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 4-0)
'97 – Long Beach State Classic (0-3) ... Service Academies Classic (Millington, TN; 2-0) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 3-1)
'98 – ACC Disney Blast (Orlando, 1-2) ... Diamond Classic (Evansville, IN; 3-0) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 1-0)
'99 – New Orleans Invitational (2-1) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 4-0)
'00 – Service Academies Classic (Millington, TN; 2-1) ... Minnesota Hormel Foods Classic (2-1) ... Kennel Clubs Classic (7-1)
'01 – Miss. St. Classic (2-1) ... Alamo Invit. (San Antonio, 3-0) ... Devil Rays Invit. (St. Pete., FL; 2-1) ... Fresno St. Classic (5-0-1)
'02 – New Orleans Classic (1-2) ... Homestead (Fla.) Challenge (3-1) ... Round Rock Classic (1-3) ... IBC (San Antonio, 4-0)
'03 – Minnesota DQ Metrodome Classic (1-2) ... Kennel Clubs Classic (Jacksonville, 6-1)
'04 – USC Classic (2-0)

SOLLMANN RECORD-BOOK WATCH – Senior 2B **Steve Sollmann** needs just 43 more hits to join former teammate Steve Stanley (385; '99-'02) as the only Notre Dame players to reach 300 career hits ... Sollmann already is tied with former three-year player Dan Peltier ('87-'89) for **7th on the ND career hits list (157)**, 12 behind his brother Scott's former classmate Mike Amrhein (269; '94-'97) ... Sollmann also is tied with Dan Bautch ('90-'02) for **5th on the ND career stolen-base list (68)**, behind Stanley (116), Sollmann's brother Scott (101; '94-'96), Pat Pesavento (94; '86-'89) and Greg Layson (80; '91-'94) ... Sollmann's **.370 career batting avg. that ranks 5th** in the ND record book behind Peltier (.406), Eric Danapilis (.405, '90-'93), Stanley (.384) and the elder Sollmann (.372).

BIG BOYS – Notre Dame's 2004 roster includes some big bodies, with nine players checking in at 6-4 or taller – led by a pitching staff that averages 6-foot-4, 215 pounds ... topping the charts are the lofty sophomore tandem of RHP **Ryan Doherty** (7-1/220) and LHP **Tom Thornton** (6-6/215), plus junior RHPs **Grant Johnson** (6-5/215) and **John Axford** (6-5/180), junior LHP **Scott Bickford** (6-5/170), freshman 1B/LHP **Mike Dury** (6-5/225), freshman RHP **Dan Kapala** (6-5/210) and senior LHP/1B **Joe Thaman** (6-4/210).

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON – Seven current Irish players are second-generation college baseball players: junior **Chris Niesel** (Rudy Niesel, Spring Hill), junior 1B/3B **Matt Edwards** (Norm Edwards, Stetson), junior LHP **Scott Bickford** (Mark Bickford, Salisbury State), sophomore C **Nick Mainieri** (Paul Mainieri, New Orleans), freshman 1B **Mike Dury** (John Dury, N.C. State), freshmen RHP **Jeff Manship** (John Manship, Arizona) and freshman RHP/1B **Chris Vasami** (Ralph Vasami, NYU).

IRISH POST 400th WIN OF MAINIERI ERA

Tenth-year Notre Dame head coach **Paul Mainieri** – now in his 22nd overall season – already is averaging 40 wins per season with the Irish, as ND posted the 400th win of the Mainieri era in the season-opening win over San Diego State (now **401-160-11-714**) ... Mainieri picked up his 700th career coaching victory vs. Georgetown on March 29, 2003, just 135 games removed from his 600th win (ND's 99 combined wins in '01 and '02 were third-most in nation, behind Florida State's 107 and South Carolina's 106) ... Mainieri's **732-439-2** career record (.625) includes 179-121-1 at St. Thomas ('83-'88) and 152-158 at Air Force ('89-'94) ... his ND career includes five BIG EAST titles and six NCAA trips with the Irish ('96, '99-'03), the program's first No. 1 ranking (in '01) and first CWS trip since '57 (in '02) ... he was the nation's only coach to **repeat as ABCA regional coach of the year** (Midwest), in 2002, and his squads have **extended** ND's streak of seasons with **40-plus wins to 15** (nation's 3rd-longest active streak) ... **35 of his ND players** have moved on to **pro ball**, including **12 drafted in the first 10 rounds** and a **pair of first-round pitchers** (Brad Lidge in '98, Aaron Heilman in '01) ... **every ND player** in the Mainieri era who has completed his eligibility with the Irish **has graduated** from Notre Dame (**53 of 53**) while the eight who were signed after their junior seasons have returned to complete or near completion of their graduation requirements (including two-time Academic All-American Brian Stavisky) ... Mainieri owns the **best BIG EAST winning pct. in the conference's history (.741, 137-48)** ... in 73 BIG EAST series spanning eight seasons, the Irish have won 55 with nine splits and only nine series wins by the opponent (just two of them being 3-game sweeps) ... the Irish have been swept just four times in 71 all-time BIG EAST doubleheaders (42 ND sweeps, 25 splits) ... Mainieri's **first nine ND teams averaged 45 wins per season**.

CHRIS NIESEL NOTES

2003 Nine-Inning Averages: 7.9 hits, 1.7 walks, 8.0 Ks, 10.3 groundouts (6.2 IP per outing; 36.8 BF per 9 IP)

2003 Situational Pitching: .222 opp. batting with runners on, .207 with 2 outs, 29% of leadoff batters reached (2.6 per 9 IP)

- His three opening-week starts at ND now include a 3.24 ERA, 1-0 record and nearly a 7-to-1 K-to-walk ratio (20 Ks/3 BB, 16.2 IP).
- Tossed near no-hitter vs. hot-hitting West Virginia (.330 team avg.) on May 3, 2003, allowing Lee Fritz bunt single with two outs left in 7-inning opener (23 BF, BB, 9 Ks) ... would have been first no-hitter by ND pitcher since 1988 (Brian Piotrowicz vs. Ball State).
- Allowed just one run (0.64 ERA), nine hits (.188 opp. avg.) and no walks in the 1st inning of 2003 games, pre-NCAAs (14 IP, 18 Ks).
- Averaged nearly 20 outs per 9 IP in 2003 via Ks (8.0) or groundouts (10.3).
- Posted a 4.6 season K-to-walk ratio in 2003 that ranks 7th in ND history ... his 4.16 career K-to-BB ratio (158/38) is ahead of Alan Walania's ND record (4.00, from '90-'93).
- Allowed just two home runs in 98.1 innings during 2003 season, after serving up team-high 7 in 2002 (72.1 IP) ... went 11 outings without allowing a home run before a Spencer Harris 3-run blast in the final 2003 regular-season series at Virginia Tech.
- 10th ND pitcher with multiple double-digit K games (10 vs. So. Ill. in '02, 11 vs. Villanova in '03) and 5th to do so in 10-year Mainieri era (others are Brad Lidge, Tim Kalita, Aaron Heilman, Danny Tamayo) ... also owns six 9-K games in his ND career (four in '03, plus last week vs. SDSU) ... combined with John Axford (12 vs. WMU) as 10th pair of ND teammates with 10-plus Ks in same season ('03).
- Fourth ND player ever to receive multiple BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week honors in same season, joining Aaron Heilman (3 in '99, 4 in '00, 2 in '01), Scott Cavey (2 in '00) and Danny Tamayo (3 in '01).
- His 14-1 career record with the Irish could include upwards of nine more wins (due to lack of run support or lost leads by the bullpen), with his '02 season also interrupted by mononucleosis and the hand injury holding him out of the '03 BIG EAST Tournament.
- Career postseason stats: 2.05 ERA in six outings (five starts), plus 27 Ks, 11 BB and 29 hits allowed in 34.1 IP (he won the 3-1 clincher at top-ranked Florida State in the Super-Regional and had a strong CWS start vs. Rice).

QUITE A RESPONSE – Notre Dame junior RHP **Chris Niesel** boasted a 22-1 overall streak – 13-0 as a senior at St. Thomas Aquinas HS, 4-0 as a freshman at ND, 3-1 in summer of '02 with the Cape Cod League's Falmouth Commodores, and 2-0 in the '01 and '02 Blue-Gold intrasquad scrimmages – before suffering the first loss of his ND career, a 7-1 game vs. Nebraska at the Minnesota Metrodome Classic (2/28/03) ... Niesel responded to that loss in fine fashion, closing the 2003 college season with a 1.94 ERA and 9-0 record in his final 13 appearances – with 84 Ks and just 17 BB in 88.1 IP, for a 4.9 K-to-walk ratio, plus 71 hits allowed and a .218 opponent batting average in that 13-outing span ... with the addition of last week's win over SDSU, Niesel's **last 14** appearances include a **1.92 ERA, 10-0 record, 5.2 K-to-walk ratio** (93 Ks/18 BB, in 94.0 innings), 74 hits and a **.215 opp. batting avg.** (9-inning averages of 8.9 Ks, 1.7 BB, 7.1 H in that 94-inning stretch).

ON A ROLL – Chris Niesel won his final nine decisions of the 2003 season and opened 2004 with a win over San Diego State, yielding a **10-decision overall winning streak** that still is seven shy of the Notre Dame record ... Ed Walsh won 17 straight decisions spanning the 1926-28 seasons ... Aaron Heilman (15-0 in 2001) is the only ND pitcher in the last 75 years to post more than 13 consecutive winning decisions ... Niesel's classmate John Axford won 13 straight decisions, spanning the 2002 (4) and '03 (9) seasons ... two others join Walsh and Heilman with the longest winning streaks in the ND record book: Frank "Dreams" Scanlan (16; 1907-09) and Herb Kelly (14; 1912-14) ... Niesel nearly posted a 10-decision single-season winning streak in '03, which would have tied for the 2nd-longest in recorded ND history.

ALL-AMERICAN DUO – Notre Dame boasts multiple returning All-Americans – senior 2B **Steve Sollmann** and junior RHP **Chris Niesel** – for the second time in the program's history, with the 1999 squad also featuring a returning All-America position player (junior IF Brant Ust) and pitcher (sophomore RHP Aaron Heilman) ... five other ND seasons have featured returning All-Americans: 1957 (senior C Elmer Kohorst), 1961 (RHP Nick Palihnich), 2000 (Heilman's junior season), 2001 (Heilman's senior season) and 2002 (senior CF Steve Stanley) ... Sollmann has the chance to follow Kohorst and Stanley as the third ND position player to be a multi-year All-American (Heilman is the program's only other player to hold that distinction, as a rare four-year honoree).

COUNTDOWN TO OPENING DAY PROVIDES BONUS OFFERINGS – The official Notre Dame athletics website (und.com) included a wide variety of features leading up to the 2004 Irish baseball season ... the Irish – ranked as high as 10th in the preseason polls – head into the 10th season of the Paul Mainieri era looking to add to the legacy of success for a program that dates back to 1892 and includes more than 800 former ND baseball monogram winners ... the "Countdown to Opening Day" offerings spanned offerings such as: weekly practice reports; audio extras and photo galleries; various preseason national polls and awards; ND Baseball History Book entries; a "Catching Up With" series featuring former ND baseball players; and a regular ND Baseball Trivia Corner ... see the Countdown headline on the und.com baseball page for links to the various features – and stay tuned for more throughout the season.

NEW-LOOK INFIELD

Notre Dame's 2004 opening-day infield had a distinctively new look, with four veterans moving to new spots to yield what could be an even tighter defensive unit than the '03 squad (which set the ND record with a .970 season fielding pct.) ... the resulting formation includes high school shortstops at three positions (sophomore SS **Greg Lopez**, junior 3B **Matt Macri**, junior 1B **Matt Edwards**), one of the nation's top-rated defensive 2B (senior **Steve Sollmann**) and a second-year catcher who was a prep 2B (senior **Javi Sanchez**, who was the starting SS on the '02 CWS team after early-season injuries to Macri and Edwards) ... here are the changes and how they came about:

- The dominoes began to fall with the emergence of **Lopez** (Upper Arlington, Ohio), who played error-free in the first 15 days of '03 fall ball ... Lopez – a regular shortstop dating back to his tee-ball days – was a part-time starter at third base for the Irish in 2003 but earned the chance to compete for his familiar shortstop role during the 2003 fall season.
- The returning starter at shortstop, **Macri** (Clive, Iowa), missed the first couple weeks of '03 fall ball with a thumb injury suffered late in the summer season ... as luck would have it, Macri had spent the summer playing third base for the Brewster Whitecaps of the Cape Cod League (that team included two other college SS), emerging as a top pro prospect at the hot corner ... the combination of Macri's prospects at third and Lopez's strong play at shortstop (plus the bonus of his boost in strength and offensive production) resulted in a shuffling on the left side ... Macri was slotted 33rd on the Perfect Game/*Baseball America* list (Oct. '03) of top college prospects for the 2004 draft (he was the fourth infielder on that list), with *BA* also rating him as the BIG EAST Conference's "best defensive third baseman" and "infielder with the strongest arm."
- **Edwards** (Mechanicsville, Va.) – who split time at third and first base with the Irish in '03 - then headed across the diamond to focus on first base.
- The most intriguing change has involved senior **Joe Thaman** (St. Louis, Mo.), who made a name for himself as one of college baseball's top defensive first basemen during the '01-'03 seasons ... inconsistency on the offensive end prompted Thaman to follow through on an idea that he'd floated earlier in his career: a move to the mound ... Thaman naturally has provided some key tips to help Edwards in his transition.
- **Sanchez** (Miami, Fla.) is the wildcard in the whole equation, holding a unique dual role as starting catcher and top utility infielder ... if Sollmann, Lopez or Macri are forced from a game, the Irish coaching staff's first inclination will be to shift Sanchez into any of those infield spots (with freshman catcher **Sean Gaston** a solid option behind the plate).

G-A-S-T-O-N SPELLS RELIEF – Notre Dame has added one of the nation's top freshman catchers in the form of in-state talent **Sean Gaston** (Brownsburg), who was the runner-up for the 2003 Indiana Mr. Baseball Award ... the arrival of Gaston gives the Irish a strong catching tandem, with senior **Javi Sanchez** (who also is the team's top utility infielder and a leading righthanded DH option) now able to catch fewer innings this season ... Sanchez caught 86% of the innings in 2003 (476 of 554), including 92% in the second half of the season and 71 of 72 in the '03 postseason.

SCHEDULE CHANGES – Fans are reminded to note several changes to the 2004 ND baseball schedule in recent weeks (always consult und.com for the most up-to-date schedule information) ... the primary changes involving one-day shifts in lateseason BIG EAST series vs. Connecticut and Rutgers ... all of the changes are listed below:

- Due to a change in the University of Connecticut finals schedule, ND's series at UConn in early May has been pushed back one day. The teams now will play a noon doubleheader on Sunday, May 9, and the third game of the series will be played at noon on Monday, May 10.
- The above ND-UConn series will have Tuesday, May 11, available as a makeup day - thus removing the previously scheduled ND-Bowling Green game (May 11) ... Bowling Green now is not on the official 56-game schedule, although the Irish and Falcons could play in a makeup-game scenario at some point in the 2004 season.
- The shift in the ND-UConn series also has resulted in a one-day shift the following weekend when Rutgers will visit Eck Stadium to face the Irish ... the teams now will play a doubleheader on Saturday, May 15 (12:05 p.m.) and then will wrap up the series several hours after graduation ceremonies, in the first Sunday-night game in Eck Stadium history (May 16, 7:05).
- The 56-game schedule has been filled out with a game vs. Central Michigan on Tuesday, March 23 (5:05) ... this game now will serve as the home opener and fills the void on the schedule after dropping the Bowling Green game.
- Two early-season games have undergone minor time changes: Feb. 27 vs. Winthrop (1:00 p.m. eastern) and Feb. 29 vs. Minnesota (11:00 a.m. eastern) ... finally, the doubleheader at Pittsburgh on Sunday, April 25, now will begin at 11:00 a.m.

PERFECT CLOSERS – Every four-year player in the Paul Mainieri era (since '95) has graduated from Notre Dame, an impressive 53-of-53 streak that does not include eight former players who signed as juniors but have returned to complete or near completion of their degree requirements (including two-time Academic All-American Brian Stavisky).

40-SOMETHING – Notre Dame owns 15 straight seasons with 40-plus wins, including 49 in 2001, 48 in '89 and '92, 46 in '90, '93, '94 and '00, 45 in '91 and '03, and 44 in '95 ... ND's active streak of seasons with 40-plus wins ranks 3rd in Division I, behind Florida State and Wichita State (both with 26 straight 40-win seasons).

OPENING DINNER AGAIN A SMASH HIT – Nearly 1,300 South-Bend area baseball fans were on hand the night of Feb. 5 at the Joyce Center Fieldhouse for the Notre Dame baseball program's third annual Opening Night Dinner, with bestselling author and baseball enthusiast **John Grisham** serving as the keynote speaker while former Notre Dame All-American **Steve Stanley** also provided an inspiring speech to the large gathering (the crowd numbered some 300 more than the previous two Opening Night Dinners, which featured keynote speakers on the level of Hall-of-Fame manager **Tommy Lasorda** and current Chicago Cubs GM **Jim Hendry**) ... see the "news" link on the und.com baseball page for excerpts of the comments from the Opening Night Dinner, plus a photo gallery.

CURRENT NOTRE DAME PLAYERS – TOP OPENING-WEEK CAREER STATS

Player (Year)	H-AB	RBI	R	SLUG	HR-3B-2B	BB/K	OB	SB	AVG
Cody Rizzo ('03-'04)	8-15	5	5	.800	1-0-1	0/3	.588	1-1	.533
Steve Sollmann ('01-'04)	17-39	5	9	.576	0-1-2	5/3	.500	4-5	.436
Greg Lopez ('03-'04)	5-13	2	1	.385	0-0-0	0/0	.467	0-0	.385
Matt Edwards ('02-'04)	11-30	8	7	.567	1-0-3	3/5	.424	0-0	.367
Matt Macri ('03-'04)	7-20	4	3	.600	1-0-2	3/7	.435	1-1	.350

Pitcher (Year)	R/ER	IP	K	BB	H-AB	AVG	WP/HB	W-L (SV)	ERA
Tom Thornton ('03, '04)	2/1	8.1	4	3	7-28	.250	0/1	1-0 (0)	1.08
Grant Johnson ('02, '04)	2/2	8.0	3	0	8-31	.258	0/0	1-0 (0)	2.25
Chris Niesel ('02, '03, '04)	6/6	16.2	20	3	14-63	.222	3/3	1-0 (0)	3.24
Ryan Doherty ('03, '04)	5/5	1.2	2	3	4-8	.500	0/2	0-0 (1)	27.00

MAINIERI ERA OPENING-WEEK TEAM STATISTICS

Year (12-18)	Avg. (H-AB)	Runs (R/gm)	TBs (HR-3B-2B)	Slugging	On-Base	SB	BB/K
1995 (1-2)	.352 (38-108)	23 (7.7)	60 (2-3-10)	.556	.450	2-4	18/25
1996 (0-2)	.246 (17-69)	8 (4.0)	28 (1-0-8)	.406	.316	1-2	4/22
1997 (0-3)	.297 (33-111)	17 (5.7)	46 (1-2-6)	.414	.350	1-1	8/25
1998 (1-2)	.260 (27-104)	19 (6.3)	39 (3-1-1)	.375	.353	2-3	14/21
1999 (1-3)	.197 (25-127)	11 (2.8)	38 (2-0-7)	.299	.270	4-4	10/36
2000 (2-1)	.279 (24-86)	14 (4.8)	40 (2-2-6)	.465	.304	2-2	4/16
2001 (2-1)	.302 (35-116)	17 (5.7)	46 (0-2-7)	.397	.385	6-9	13/22
2002 (1-2)	.257 (29-111)	16 (5.3)	43 (2-1-6)	.387	.415	6-10	8/15
2003 (2-2)	.367 (54-147)	36 (9.0)	86 (6-2-10)	.585	.428	2-2	10/24
2004 (2-0)	.310 (18-58)	10 (5.0)	23 (1-0-2)	.397	.388	4-4	6/17
Mainieri Era	.289 (300-1,037)	171 (5.7)	449 (20-13-63)	.433	.366	30-41	95/213

Per-Game Averages: 3.2 walks, 7.1 strikeouts, 1.0 stolen bases, 3.2 extra-base hits (0.7 home runs)

Year (12-18)	R/ER	IP	ERA	K/BB	H-AB	AVG	Slug. (HR)	WP/HB	(Season ERA)
1995 (1-2)	35/30	25.0	10.80	18/20	39-102	.382	.559 (2)	7/9	(4.53)
1996 (0-2)	21/18	16.0	10.13	11/11	26-72	.361	.556 (3)	1/2	(3.87)
1997 (0-3)	35/24	25.0	8.64	17/21	34-107	.318	.486 (3)	7/5	(4.51)
1998 (1-2)	14/11	25.0	3.96	22/14	24-90	.267	.345 (0)	2/4	(4.02)
1999 (1-3)	33/28	33.0	7.64	29/15	42-141	.298	.560 (10)	6/2	(5.15)
2000 (2-1)	8/5	22.0	2.05	23/7	19-79	.241	.354 (2)	0/1	(3.93)
2001 (2-1)	14/7	29.0	2.17	13/8	26-106	.245	.292 (0)	0/8	(3.22)
2002 (1-2)	20/19	27.2	6.18	22/9	37-112	.330	.473 (3)	2/4	(3.57)
2003 (2-2)	44/34	32.0	9.56	11/28	46-136	.338	.544 (4)	7/5	(3.35)
2004 (2-0)	2/1	16.0	0.56	18/5	9-53	.170	.208 (0)	1/2	
Mainieri Era	226/177	250.2	6.36	184/138	302-998	.310	.466 (27)	33/42	(4.02)

Per-Game Averages: 6.1 strikeouts, 4.6 walks, 10.0 hits, 0.9 home runs, 1.1 wild pitches, 1.4 hit batters

Year (12-18)	Errors	Chances	Pct.	UE Runs	Double Plays	UER Loss Margin	(Season Fld)
1995 (1-2)	6	97	.938	5	0	0	.960
1996 (0-2)	4	73	.945	3	1	0	.953
1997 (0-3)	12	118	.898	11	1	1	.942
1998 (1-2)	4	121	.967	3	4	0	.962
1999 (1-3)	9	149	.940	5	0	0	.954
2000 (2-1)	3	102	.971	3	2	1	.965
2001 (2-1)	4	129	.969	7	3	1	.964
2002 (1-2)	4	127	.969	1	5	0	.961
2003 (2-2)	8	160	.950	10	3	1	.970
2004 (2-0)	1	65	.985	1	0	0	
Mainieri Era	55	1,141	.952	49	19	4	.959

Per-Game Averages: 1.8 errors, 1.6 unearned runs, 0.6 double plays

Opening-Day Home Runs in the Mainieri Era

Bob Lisanti (Sr., C, '96) – at Georgia Tech (4-12)

Brant Ust (Jr., SS, '99) – vs. JMU, at FIU (8-4)

Kris Billmaier (Sr., RF, '03) – vs. Dayton, @ASU (10-9)

Dan Leatherman (Jr., 1B, '98) – vs. Florida State, in Orlando (10-1)

Matt Bok (Sr., DH, '02) – vs. Missouri, @UNO (7-6)

Matt Edwards (Jr., 1B, '04) – vs. San Diego State, @USC (7-1)

Top Opening-Week Pitchers in Paul Mainieri Era (min. 3 IP)

Player (Year)	R/ER	IP	K	BB	H-AB	AVG	WP/HB	W-L (SV)	ERA
Tom Thornton (So., '04 vs. USC)	1/0	6.0	4	2	4-19	.211	0/0	1-0 (0)	0.00
Scott Cavey (Sr., '00 vs. Air Force)	0/0	6.0	6	1	1-19	.053	0/0	1-0 (0)	0.00
Alex Shilliday (So., '98 vs. FSU)	0/0	5.0	6	4	1-16	.063	0/1	1-0 (0)	0.00
Matt Buchmeier (Jr., '01 vs. Miss. St.)	0/0	4.0	1	1	4-20	.250	0/1	0-0 (0)	0.00
Chris McKeown (Jr., '99 vs. JMU)	0/0	4.0	4	2	4-20	.250	0/0	0-0 (0)	0.00
Danny Tamayo (Fr., '98 vs. Duke)	0/0	4.0	0	1	1-10	.100	0/1	0-0 (0)	0.00

PROSPECT PROGNOSTICATIONS

A glance through *Baseball America's* annual college preview issue shows many accolades for the Notre Dame baseball program while highlighting the many challenging opponents that await the Irish in 2004.

- *BA* picked the Irish to win their fifth BIG EAST regular-season title, with senior 2B **Steve Sollmann**, junior 1B **Matt Edwards**, sophomore OF **Cody Rizzo** and junior RHP **Chris Niesel** each named to *BA's* **preseason all-BIG EAST** team (Sollmann was projected as the player of the year).
- *BA's* list of the league's top-10 prospects include three ND juniors: RHP **Grant Johnson** (2nd), 3B/SS **Matt Macri** (4th) and Niesel (5th) ... **Macri** also was rated as the nation's **#41 prospect among true juniors** ... **Johnson** has two years of eligibility left and was slotted by *BA* as the **#12 prospect for the '05 draft**, along with current sophomores/second-year juniors (an **earlier Oct. '03 projection** by *BA* had him rated as college baseball's **No. 24** draft-eligible prospect **for the '04** draft, with **Macri 33rd**, **Niesel 39th** and junior RHP **John Axford 44th**, prior to his season-ending elbow surgery) ... **Macri** is the fourth 2B/SS/3B on the junior prospects list, behind Georgia Tech 2B Eric Patterson, Clemson 3B Brad McCann and Arizona State SS Dustin Pedroia.
- **Sollmann** is **12th** on *BA's* list of the top **senior prospects** while sophomore RHP **Ryan Doherty** is **47th** on *BA's* list of the nation's top **sophomore** prospects (he is the 20th pitcher and 15th RHP on that list) ... freshman RHP **Jeff Manship** is *BA's* **No. 3-rated freshman** prospect behind UNC lefthander Andrew Miller and Southern California RHP/OF Ian Kennedy (Manship underwent elbow surgery on Feb. 11) ... another Irish RHP, **Derik Olvey**, checks in at **#22 on the freshman prospects** list, with ND joining UNC (1/9) and Tulane (16/24) as the only schools with multiple players among the top 25 on that list ... **Manship** and **Olvey** were rated 1-2 among *BA's* list of the BIG EAST's top five newcomers.
- *BA's* list of "top tools" among BIG EAST players includes **Sollmann** as the league's **"best baserunner"** and **"best defensive 2B"** while **Macri** is cited as the **"best defensive 3B"** and **"best infield arm."**
- The BIG EAST was listed 7th among *BA's* rankings of the nation's top conferences, behind the SEC, ACC, Pac-10, Big 12, C-USA and Big West ... the BIG EAST also owned the 7th-most alums currently in the Major Leagues (19) on *BA's* top conferences chart.

Here's a look at how *BA* rates Notre Dame's upcoming 2004 opponents (see release on und.com for full list of opponent info. ... national ratings for "top tools" and other categories had yet to be released):

Winthrop (35-22 in '03; 1st in Big South at 15-4, 1-2 at BS Tour.; return 20 of 24 letterwinners) – picked to finish 2nd in Big South behind Coastal Carolina ... predicted all-conference players include 2B **Matt Matkovich**, 3B **David Skogin** and OF **Daniel Carte** (#3 prospect, best pure hitter) ... C **Chris Leroux** (Big South's #6 prospect, best catcher's arm) also is slated to be the team's closer ... team returns all of its regulars and is a proven fielding team, with 1B **Bennett Stapf**, 2B **Matkovich** and SS **Matt Repec** each rated the Big South's top defensive players at their positions (Carte was cited for "best OF arm") ... **Matkovich** led the league in '03 with a .377 batting avg. (8 HR, 34 RBI) while **Carte** (.340, 13 HR, 53 RBI) was the BIG South HR leader and MVP of Great Lakes League in the summer of '03.

Florida Atlantic (47-16 in '03, 1st in Atlantic Sun at 25-7, 1-2 at NCAA Miami Reg.; return 15 of 25 LWs) – picked to repeat as A-Sun champs (#23 in *BA* preseason poll) ... all-conference picks include 1B **Derek Brown**, 3B **Jeff Fiorentino** (player of year, #1 prospect, "best pure hitter"), OF **Rob Horst** and LHP **Randy Beam** (pitcher of year, 1st team AA, nation's #50 senior prospect) ... four FAU players – C **Robbie Orton**, 1B **Brown**, 2B **Derek Hutton** and SS **Evan Brannon** – each were cited as the Big South's best defensive players at their positions ... RHP **Mike Crotta** is predicted to be rookie of the year (#2 newcomer, nation's #13 freshman prospect) ... **Florentino** (league's top hitter in '03, at .382 with 15 HR, 49 RBI) and **Brown** provide big bats in middle of lineup, **Beam** (top pitcher at 2.39, 13-1) noted for crafty approach and stellar control (17 BB in 102 IP in '03) ... FAU is leaving for the Sun Belt after '04.

Minnesota (40-22 in '03, 1st in Big Ten at 24-6, 1-2 at NCAA Long Beach reg.; return 17 of 24 LWs) – checked in at 30th in *BA* preseason top 50, picked to win fourth Big Ten regular-season title in last five years ... projected all-conference players include LHP **Glen Perkins** (best fastball, best control, #2 prospect, nation's #24 sophomore prospect), 1B **Andy Hunter**, 3B **David Hrnčirik** ("best defensive 3B") and OF **Sam Steidl** ("best pure hitter" and "best defensive OF") ... the Gophers have welcomed three of Big Ten's top newcomers: OF **Sean Kommerstad** (2nd), RHP **Josh Oslin** (3rd) and LHP **John Gaub** (4th).

TALE OF THREE NUMBERS – Current sophomore DH **Steve Andres** finished 11th among ND's 2003 regulars in season batting average (.269) but he still made a significant impact on the '03 season, thanks to a .442 slugging pct. and .415 on-base pct. (ranking 5th and 4th, respectively, on the '03 team).

WINNING BIG & SMALL - Notre Dame was 9-1 in 2003 one-run games (including 4-3 NCAA loss to Cal State Fullerton) while posting 24 "big wins" (margin of five-plus runs) ... by comparison, ND's 2002 College World Series team was 9-8 in one-run games and totaled 21 wins by 5-plus runs.

EVEN STEVEN – Notre Dame's 2003 scoring dominance in the 2nd inning (73-17) nearly was matched by the team's scoring edge two innings later in the 4th (57-24) and then two later in the 6th (80-34) for a combined edge of 210-75 (+135) in those three frames ... the Irish did not outscore the '03 opponents by more than 10 runs in any other inning (1st, 3rd, 5th, 8th) while being outscored in only the 7th (33-36) and the 9th (11-19).

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? – The first nine years of the **Paul Mainieri** era at Notre Dame ('95-'03) included many noteworthy individuals who have gone on to distinguish themselves after completing their Irish baseball careers ... included among the 61 former Mainieri players listed below are: three pitchers who have reached the Major Leagues, 11 other current pro baseball players (plus 21 former pro players), seven lawyers/current law students, three medical-school students, 12 others who have received or are pursuing postgraduate degrees (three of them MBAs, one Ph.D.), three engineers, five involved in medical supplies sales, eight college/high school coaches, three commodity brokers, a prospective dentist, a sports agent, a contractor and a town mayor – plus others involved in areas such as youth services, accounting, sales, athletic administration, technology, advertising, graphic design, banking and consulting ... see p. 15 of the 2004 ND baseball media guide or und.com (click “news”) for the complete list.

Notre Dame Baseball 2003 Final Summer Stats (College Wood-Bat Leagues)

Here's a final look at 2003 summer baseball stats for current Notre Dame baseball players:

Matt Macri (Brewster Whitecaps, Cape Cod League) – finished second in the CCL with 7 HRs (behind the 11 by USC's Joey Metropoulos, with Falmouth) ... chosen for the CCL home run derby ... hit mostly in the 3-hole ... played at 3B, with team featuring two other college starting SS ... helped Brewster share Eastern Division title (24-17-3) ... hit .172 (21-for-122) on squad with .231 team batting avg., plus 23 runs, 7 home runs, 1 triple, 4 doubles, 16 RBI, 30 walks, 8-of-11 stolen bases in 36 games played ... saw his summer season end due to hand injury in late July.

Chris Niesel (Falmouth Commodores, Cape Cod League) – served in new role as bullpen ace, ranking 5th in the CCL with 7 saves ... also posted 1-4 record in 13 games (3 starts), with 33 strikeouts, 11 walks and 24 hits allowed in 26.1 innings ... team finished 16-26.

John Axford (Cotuit Kettleers, Cape Cod League) – joined CCL in midseason after completing training with the Canadian National Team ... made 7 appearances with Cotuit (9.00, 1-0, 9 IP, 4 H, 16 BB, 8 Ks) ... team finished 20-21.

Javi Sanchez (Madison Mallards, Northwest League) – helped team win first-half league title, en route to 38-26 final record ... split time at C/3B while playing in front of large crowds that numbered up to 4,000 ... hit .262 (50-for-191) on squad with .257 team batting avg. ... added 19 R, 2 2B, 26 RBI, 17 BB, 9-16 SV, a .272 slugging pct., .325 on-base pct. and 10 errors in 53 games played.

Joe Thaman (Madison Mallards, Northwest League) – hit .215 (28-for-130) with 12 RBI (48 GP, 13 R, 7 2B, HR, 13 BB, 5-7 SB, .292 slugging, .301 on-base, 6 Es).

Tyler Jones (Madison Mallards, Northwest League) – made 10 appearances (4 starts) with 15 Ks in 32 IP (8.72, 0-4, 4 HB, 12 BB, 3 WP, .368 opp. avg.).

Tom Thornton (Newport Gulls, New England Baseball League) – ranked 4th on staff with 2.91 ERA in 9 appearances and 8 starts (3-1, 2 complete games, 1 shutout, 52.2 IP, 48 H, 23 BB, 43 Ks, .247 opp. batting, 1 WP, 1 HB, 25-14 team record).

Martin Vergara (Sanford Mainers, New England Baseball League) – made 7 relief appearances and 1 start, with a 3.21 ERA (1-0, 14 IP, 11 H, 8 BB, 7 Ks, .220, WP, 28-13 team record).

Craig Cooper (Hays Larks, Jayhawk League) – enjoyed stellar summer while playing LF and batting in 2 and 3 hole for most of season ... stayed with Flax family that has hosted several previous ND players ... team won league title (22-6), posted 39-10 overall record and placed 2nd at regional tournament before reaching final six at annual National Baseball Congress World Series in Wichita ... led team in stolen bases (24-of-27) while ranking 2nd in RBI (38) and 3rd in batting (.337, 57-for-169), HRs (5), slugging (.527) and on-base (.413), plus 42 R, 5 3B, 7 2B, 20 BB and .939 fielding (4 Es) on squad that owned .299 team batting avg. and 42-12 final record.

Cody Rizzo (Hays Larks, Jayhawk League) – summer cut short by foot injury (7 GP, .174, 4-for-23, 4 R, 2 2B, 2 RBI, BB, 1-1 SB).

Greg Lopez (Delaware Cows, Great Lakes League) – hit .268 (22-for-82) as infield on squad with .296 team batting avg. and 26-15 final record (30 GP, 13 R, 4 2B, 6 RBI, 5 BB, 1-1 SB, .337 OB, .317 slugging).

Ryan Doherty (Delaware Cows, Great Lakes League) – dominant closer, allowing just one earned run for a 0.46 ERA while racking up 28 Ks in 19.2 IP (8 GP/1 GS, 3 saves, 10 H, 5 BB, 1 HB, 1 WP, 2.75 team ERA).

Brennan Grogan (Delaware Cows, Great Lakes League) – saw his summer cut short by hamstring injury (4 GP, 2-for-7, 2-2 SB).

Matt Edwards (Waynesboro Generals, Shenedoah League) – hit .300 in second half of summer to raise batting avg. to .207, while playing 3B, SS and 1B (28 GP/27 GS, 19-for-92, 7 R, 3 2B, 3 RBI, .239 slugging, 9 BB, .291 OB, .909 fielding, 6 Es) ... injury-riddled team finished 13-27, with .217 team batting avg.

Scott Bickford (Waynesboro Generals, Shenedoah League) – posted 3.00 ERA in 12 relief appearances (1-0, 18 IP, 16 H, 5 BB, 16 Ks, .222, 2 WP, 2 HB).

Matt Bransfield (Colorado Sox, Rocky Mountain League) – hit cleanup while ranking among top hitters in entire National Baseball Congress, spanning 16 leagues across the nation ... his 9 regular-season HRs tied for the national lead among all NBC teams (he finished with 12 total HRs) ... also ranked 4th in the NBC regular-season rankings for RBI (36), 9th in batting (.381) and 8th in hits (32) ... hit 4-for-11 at the NBC World Series (2 HR, 4 RBI, 3 R, 2 BB) ... team finished 25-15 overall and 2nd in the RML (19-8).