

NOTRE DAME BASEBALL GAME NOTES – vs. RUTGERS (MAY 23, 2003)

The Notre Dame baseball team (41-15) heads into another BIG EAST Tournament showdown vs. Rutgers (Friday, 3:30 EDT), with the winner getting the upper hand in the quest for the 2003 BIG EAST title ... ND is looking to become the first team to win back-to-back BIG EAST tournament titles since St. John's won the first two BETs in 1984 and '85 ... Kalita logged seven gutsy shutout innings of relief to beat RU in the 2002 BIG EAST title game (3-2, in 10), shaking off a 5th-inning linedrive off the bat of Val Majewski that glanced off his forehead (the postgame goose-egg matched the seven zeroes he put on the board).

Ryan Kalita – Career Stats

Year	ERA	W-L	GP/GS	CG	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	2B-3B-HR	BF/B/Avg	WP	HB
2000	0.00	0-0	1/0	0	0	1.0	0	0	0	2	1	0-0 0	.000	1	0
2001	2.45	2-0	4/2	0	0	11.0	10	4	3	8	9	0-0 1	.238	5	0
2002	3.16	5-0	16/4	1	0	42.2	45	19	15	14	36	6-2-2	188 /.278	1	2
2003	3.67	5-1	11/10	0	0	61.1	55	29	25	25	50	10-0-5	265 /.246	5	6
Totals	3.34	12-1	32/16	1	0	116.0	110	52	43	49	96	16-2-8	.257	12	8

Kalita's Career Appearances vs. Rutgers (first two in relief)

Date	Site	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	HR	WP	HB	Score	W-L	ERA
5/5/02	ND's Eck Stadium	1.2	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0-11		
5/25/02	BE Tournament	7.0	6	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	3-2 (10)	W	
5/11/03	RU	5.0	5	1	1	3	6	0	0	0	3-5 (19)		
Totals		13.2	14	5	2	6	12	0	0	0		1-0	1.32

Ryan Kalita Career Stats vs. RU – 1.32, 1-0, 3 GP, 13.2 IP, 14 H, 5 R/2 ER, 6 BB, 12 Ks

Cerulo (0-for-5) – E6F ... 5-3, 4-3 ... 5-3, KS
 Frazier (1-for-5) – 1-3/SAC ... KS, 1B-LS, F-8 LC ... BB/SB, F-8 LC, F-9
 Normane (1-for-3) – F-9/SF/RBI ... BB, 4-3, BB ... FC, 2B-RC
 Esposito (1-for-3) – 4-3 ... KL ... BB, 1B-LC
 Rodriguez (1-for-4) – 1B-RC/RBI/R ... 6U-3 GDP, F-9, P-4
 Vasquez (1-for-5) – 1B-4, BB, KS, 6-3 ... FF-3, KS
 Badger (1-for-6) – KS, KS, 1B-7 ... KL, FC, 3U
 Wolski (1-for-3) – KS, KS, 1B-9
 Defendis (1-for-1) – BB/SB/R, 1B-LS/CS
 Bionde (1-for-2) – 1B-MI/RBI, KL
Totals: 9-for-36 (.250)

ND-RUTGERS SERIES NOTES

- ND holds a 15-11 series edge vs. Rutgers (7-4 at RU) and had won eight straight vs. the Knights before the 2002 series-ending 11-0 loss (now 10 of the last 12) ... RU held a 7-4 series lead after the first 11 meetings.
- The Irish opened the '02 series vs. RU by sweeping the doubleheader (6-5, 7-2) but Rutgers won the series finale, 11-0 (see game notes below).
- The teams have **split six meetings in the BIG EAST Tournament**, with RU posting an 10-inning win (7-6) over ND in the pivotal game of the 1998 BET before shutting out ND in the '98 title game (11-0) ... the Irish returned the favor in a 2001 elimination game (6-2), led by [Aaron Heilman's](#) six-hitter.
- The series has featured its share of blowouts (six of last 19 decided by 8-plus runs) and tense finishes (13 total games decided by 1-2 runs, with eight won by ND).

2003 ND-RU SERIES NOTES (2-0, 2-10, 3-5 in 19) – ND hit just .192 (23-for-120) in the three games but stayed in contention with a 3.48 staff ERA and .965 fielding/5 Es (RU countered with a 1.54 ERA and just three errors/.979 fielding, to offset .265 hitting) ... ND totaled seven runs while stranding 25 runners in the series ... in Sunday's game, ND hit just 1-for-20 with 2 outs (RU was 9-for-27) while the Irish hit 2-for-11 with runners in scoring position (RU 1-for-14) and had five leadoff batters reach (RU put six leadoff men on base) ... ND hit better in the series with runners in scoring position (.214 to .132) but RU had the better 2-out batting (.256 to .167) and put 47% of leadoff batters on base (16, compared to 29%/10 for ND).

DOUBLEHEADER RECAP – Chris Niesel (6 IP, 6 H, BB, 2 Ks) logged another shutout outing in ND's 2-0 opening win but RU bounced back to win the 10-2 nightcap ... RU scored in six of the first seven innings of the nightcap while the Irish had their chances to get back in the game but left 11 runners on base ... J.P. Gagne closed the opener (H) ... Steve Andres was the offensive hero in game one (solo HR, RBI single) while making his first start since April 23 ... SS Matt Macri made a huge 360-degree spin play behind the bag to save two runs in the 4th ... Jack Egbert took the loss (7 IP, 7 H, BB, 4 Ks) while Shaun Parker won the nightcap (5.2 IP, R, 5 H, 4 BB, 3 Ks), with John Axford taking the game-2 loss (3.2 IP, 6 R, 3 H, 6 BB, 2 HB, 2 WP, 4 Ks).

AN EXTRA-INNING CLASSIC – Notre Dame's 19-inning loss at Rutgers (5-3) is believed to be the longest game in the program's history, in addition to ranking as the longest BIG EAST game and tied for 10th in the NCAA record book ... here are some notes from that nearly five-hour battle (4:42. also an ND record):

* Some of the raw numbers included: 511 pitches (260 by ND), 144 batters trips to the plate (68 by ND), 44 baserunners (16 by ND), 32 half-inning zeroes on the scoreboard (15 by ND pitchers), 24 runners left on base (8 by ND), 24 hits (9 by ND), 23 strikeouts thrown (12 by ND), all 19 innings caught by Javi Sanchez (after 11 in Saturday DH), 14 walks (7 by ND), 13 extra-inning runners LOB (6 by ND), 12 half-innings that went 1-2-3 (4 by ND, all in extra innings), 11 leadoff baserunners (5 by ND), 11 runners on 2nd who did not score (5 by ND), 7 sac. bunts (2 by ND), 5 other runners on 3rd who did not score (1 by ND), 6 baserunners thrown out (4 by ND), 5 stolen bases (2 by ND), 4 intentional walks (1 by ND), only 3 players with extra-base hits (Sollmann, Thaman and Normane).

* ND broke up Aaron Kalb's no-hit bid in the 6th, when Steve Sollmann's two-run shot over the rightfield fence yielded a 2-1 lead, but Rutgers tied the game in the ninth (on an unconventional sequence that included just one hit).

* The Irish again were three outs from the win after scoring in the 15th but Rutgers matched the ND run to set up four more innings of play.

* Four senior righthanders – namely starter Ryan Kalita (5 IP, R, 5 H, 3 BB, 6 KS) and veteran relievers J.P. Gagne and Matt Laird – led the way for an ND pitching staff that held the RU offense to a .265 overall series batting average (nearly 50 points below its season average) and just 15 total runs in the three-game series (in 35 innings of play) ... freshman Ryan Doherty and senior Brandon Vilorio followed Kalita with shutout innings before Gagne turned in a gutsy six-inning, 78-pitch (47 strikes) stint.

* Gagne was inches away from his 13th save (4 H, 3 BB, 2 Ks), after an Alberto Vasquez single up the middle, a sac. bunt, intentional walk and strikeout ... Graig Badger (who would end up 0-for-9 from his leadoff spot) then tapped a full-count pitch to the left side and Gagne made a slightly off-balance throw to 1B Joe Thaman the game appeared to be over but Thaman was ruled to have his foot off the bag (scored an error on Gagne) – with Moskowitz alertly continuing on from third amidst the confusion to force extra innings with an unearned run.

* Senior Matt Laird – who won the 11-inning, series-sweeping game at RU as ND's 2001 closer – added his own bulldog effort after relieving Gagne in the 14th (5.2 IP, 3 R, 4 H, BB, 70 pitches), with Steve Normane's HR down the RF line winning the game.

COULD-A, SHOULD-A, WOULD-A – There were plenty of close calls and scoring chances that could have helped end the game well before the 19th:

* Top of 2nd – Kris Billmaier was thrown out at 3rd on a failed hit-and-run play before Kalb overcame a pair of walks in the inning and left Steve Andres stranded on 3rd by rolling up a 2-out groundout.

* Top of 3rd– Javi Sanchez was on 2nd with 1 out but was thrown out trying to take 3rd on a ball in the dirt.

* Bottom of 3rd – With 2 outs and Vinny Esposito on 1st, Normane drove a double to right-center and RU sent Esposito for home – but the RF Cody Rizzo and 2B Sollmann make strong throws and Sanchez made the tag at the plate.

* Top of 5th– Andres – who had homered in Saturday's 2-0 win – nearly left the park again, sending the first pitch of the inning deep to dead-center field.

* Bottom of 6th – Normane hit a 1-out single up the middle and stole 2nd but Doherty served up a pair of flyouts.

* Bottom of 7th – Defendis led off with a single to center but Vilorio took the mound and rolled up a 4-6-3 double play.

* Bottom of 11th – A Jason Grover leadoff single, a balk call, a sac. bunt and intentional walk put runners on the corners but Gagne rolled up a grounder to the SS Matt Macri, who threw home and Sanchez made the tag to keep ND alive ... a wild pitch put another runner at 3rd but a flyout ended the inning.

* Top of 12th – Thaman hit a leadoff double to right-center, moved to 3rd on fly ball and then appeared to score when Andres tapped a ball to the right side of the infield (the 1B Normane had fielded the ball and was preparing to throw home as Thaman was sliding in) – but the ball was called foul, Andres ended up striking out and Atchison walked Rizzo before getting the final out on a foulout down the rightfield line.

* Bottom of 13th – Normane sent a leadoff single up the middle and moved up on a sac. bunt but Gagne extended the game with a popup, intentional walk and groundball.

* Bottom of 16th – Matt Wolski reached and took 2nd on a 2-out throwing error by 3B Greg Lopez but Laird induced a flyout.

* Top of 17th – Andres drew a 1-out walk and pinch-runner Craig Cooper stole second, followed by a flyout and intentional walk to Macri – but the SS Mike Bionde made a play in the hole and forced Cooper at 3rd.

* Top of 18th – Sollmann drove the right-center gap and was digging for a triple but RU executed the 9-4-5 putout.

* Bottom of 18th – Jeff Grose drew a leadoff walk and moved up on a sac. bunt but Laird rolled up two 6-3 groundouts.

* Top of 19th – Thaman hit a leadoff single to right-center and ND was inches from executing the hit-and-run, but the 2B Badger stabbed a grounder to the right side, stepped on the bag and sent a rising throw to 1st for the double play.

ND VETERANS CAREER STATS VS. RUTGERS

Joe Thaman: .290 (11-for-38), 5 R, 3 RBI, 3 2B, BB, 8 Ks

Steve Sollmann: .245 (13-for-53), 10 R, 11 RBI, 2 HR, 3B, 2 BB, 4 Ks, 6-6 SB

Javi Sanchez: .194 (6-for-31), 4 R, 2 RBI, HR, 4 BB, 6 Ks, 1-2 SB

Kris Billmaier: .125 (6-for-48), 7 R, 6 RBI, 8 BB, 7 Ks

ND VETERAN PITCHERS CAREER STATS VS. RU

Matt Laird – 9.00, 1-1, 3 GP, 9.0 IP, 10 H, 4 BB, 6 Ks, 3 HB, WP

Wolski – HBP, F-8 ... F-8 RC, E5T, 6-3
Frazier – F-8, F-8, F-8
Normane – 4-3 SAC, F-8, HR-RL/2 RBI
Grose – 1B-LL, BB

Cerulo – F-7 Badger – KL ... KL, 6-3
Esposito – 1B-LS/R, KS, 1B-MI
Grover – F-9/SF/RBI, 6-3
Defendis – P-4, 1-3 SAC Gaynor – 4-3, 6-3

Brandon Vilorio – 0.00, 2 SV, 4 GP, 8 IP, 3 H, 3 BB, 5 Ks

Badger – 0-for-3 (L-5, FC ... 1-3 ... F-8 RC) Frazier – 1-for-2, 2 RBI, HR (FC, F-7/SF/RBI ... HR-7/RBI)
Normane – 1-for-2, BB (1B-9, BB ... F-8 RC) Esposito – KL, 3U
Vasquez – KS Cerulo – F-9 ... F-9 Rodriguez – E5F
Wolski – 1-3 Bionde – 4-6-3 GDP

Peter Ogilvie – 6.30, 0-2, 2 GS, 10 IP, 13 H, 6 BB, 7 Ks, 2 HB

Cerulo – 3B-LC/R, 1B-MI ... KL, 1B-8, KS Frazier – L-5-3 DP ... KS, KS, P-4, F-8
Normane – 4-3 ... 4-3, P-4, 1B-RC/RBI/R, BB/R Esposito – BB ... KS
Rodriguez – HR-7/2 RBI ... P-4, 2B-RL, 6-3, 1B-RC/RBI Badger – 6-3, 6-3, F-9, 5-3

Ryan Doherty vs. RU ('03)

Esposito – KL Normane – 1B-MI/SB
Vasquez – L-8 Cerulo – P-8 Defendis – 1B-8

RUTGERS 2002 STATS VS. ND

Cory Rodriguez: .375 (6-for-16), 4 GS, 2 R, 4 RBI, HR, 2B, 2 Ks

Nick Cerulo: .350 (7-for-20), 6 GS, 4 R, 3B, 2 BB, 4 Ks, 3 Es

Steve Normane: .333 (7-for-21), 6 GS, 2 R, 7 RBI, 2B, 5 BB, 2 Ks

Jeff Frazier: .217 (5-for-23), 6 GS, 4 R, 4 RBI, HR, 2 BB, HBP, 7 Ks, 0-1 SB, 2 Es

Vinny Esposito: .182 (2-for-11), 5 GP/3 GS, 2B, 4 BB, 6 Ks, 1-1 SB

Alberto Vasquez: .125 (1-for-8), 3 GP/2 GS, R, BB, 4 Ks, E

Graig Badger: .105 (2-for-19), 5 GS, 2 R, 4 BB, 5 Ks, E

Rich Canuso: 0-for-1

Jamell Rosario: 2 GP

Jason Grover: 1 GP

RECAPPING THE 2002 ND-RU GAMES

- RU ace Bobby Brownlie was poised to beat ND in the 2002 series opener but the Irish plated four runs in the bottom of the 7th for a 6-5 win ... Brownlie was one strike away from the win but No. 9 hitter [Joe Thaman](#) went the other way with a single through the left side, Steve Stanley singled to left (5-3) and Steve Sollmann sent a 2-run, game-tying single into right-center ... the game then ended in unusual fashion when the CF walked away from the ball, thinking the game was over, with Stanley motoring home all the way from 1st base for the win ... [Drew Duff](#) picked up the win in relief (2.1 IP, 2 H, 8 BF) of [John Axford](#) (4.2 IP, 4 H, 5 R, 5 K, 8 BB) ... Brownlie did not strike out an ND batter (he was averaging nearly nine per 9 IP) while allowing nine hits and one walk, with five of six runs earned.
- A four-run 2nd inning lifted ND to a 7-2 win in the second game of the '02 RU series, with freshman RHP Grant Johnson picking up the win (6.0 IP, 5 H, UER, 4 BB, 5 Ks) and [Brandon Vilorio](#) notching the save by logging the final three innings (UER, 2 H, 2 BB, 2 Ks) ... Tom Crohan took the loss (1.2 IP, 4 H, 3 H, 5 BB).
- The 11-0 RU win in the finale halted ND's team-record 231-game scoring streak ... Tom Wheeler (8.1 IP, 2 H, 3 BB) had the win while [Peter Ogilvie](#) the loss (2.0 IP, 4 R/3 ER, 4 H, 3 BB) ... Mike Cerulo led the RU offense (3-for-5, 3 R).
- ND used another efficient offensive performance (8 runs on 8 hits) and the strong pitching of Johnson (7 IP, 2 R/1 ER, 9 H, 2 BB, 7 Ks) to open the '02 BET with an 8-3 win over Rutgers ... Brownlie took the loss (5 IP, 7 R/6 ER, 6 H, 3 BB, 3 Ks) ... Stanley (3-for-4, BB, RBI, 3 R) and Thaman (2-for-3, 2 R) paced the ND offense.
- Rutgers forced a decisive final game at the 2002 BET, with a 4-3 win over ND ... RU scored the decisive run in the bottom of the 8th ... Peter Ogilvie was the hard-luck loser (8 IP, 4 R, 10 H, 3 BB, 6 Ks). • Matt Bok's 6th-inning double tied the 2002 BIG EAST title game and the Irish won in the 10th (3-2), when [Brian Stavisky](#) doubled home [Steve Sollmann](#) (he scored all the way from first base, on a ball into the leftfield corner) ... Ryan Kalita logged seven gutsy innings in relief of Axford for the win (6 H, 3 BB, 6 Ks) ... Kalita's outing nearly was one of his shortest instead of the longest, after a scare with two outs in the top of the 5th ... RU's Val Majewski ripped a 1-1 pitch back towards the mound and the ball glanced off Kalita's glove before plunking him on the right side of the welt (two hours later, as he met with the media, Kalita still sported the welt left from the stunning hit - but he didn't seem to mind taking home such a personal memento from the landmark win) ... RU's Ryan Molchan had the decision in both of the final ND-RU games in 2002 (5.2 total IP, UER, 2 H, BB, 5 Ks).

Note Dame Hitting Trends and Quick Notes

Steve Sollmann – 14-for-25 (.560) in last 5 ... 8-for-26 career BET (.308, 3 R, 2 RBI, 3 BB, 2 Ks, HBP, 3-3 SB) ... 29 multi-hit games, 9 multi-RBI341 hitter on road ... 32 season SBs (4th ND history), 61 career (6th) ... 4th-most hits ever by ND junior (241, besting his brother Scott's 239) ... had game-tying, 9th-inning single up the middle in CWS vs. Rice ... 48 error-free games in '03 (just 2 E in last 32 gms) ... 47 leadoff starts.

Brennan Grogan – 5-for-9 last 2 games (.229 in previous 13)305 hitter on road ... 12 multi-hit games, 6 multi-RBI ... 38 starts in 2-hole.

Matt Edwards – 11-for-22 last 5 gms ... team-best .360 batting on road ... 23 multi-hit games, 19 multi-RBI ... 14 starts at cleanup, 37 in 3-hole ... 32 starts at 1B, 21 at 3B.

Kris Billmaier – 4-for-35 last 11 gms (.114) ... 5-for-19 career BET (.263, R, 5 RBI, HR, K, 2 SAC)273 hitter on road ... 15 multi-hit gms, 9 multi-RBI ... 24 starts in CF, 11 in 5-hole.

Javi Sanchez – 8-for-17 career BET (.471, 7 R, 3 RBI, HR, 2 2B, 4 BB, 2 Ks, 1-1 SB) ... 5-for-7 last 2 gms (after 0-for-13 slump)306 hitter on road ... 17 multi-hit games, 4 multi-RBI.

Matt Macri – 2-for-13 last 4 gms (.154)202 hitter on road ... 41 error-free games (1 E in last 7) ... 18 multi-hit gms, 4 multi-RBI ... 26 starts in 6-hole.

Cody Rizzo – 7 RBI in last 5 games, despite hitting just 4-for-14 (.286)318 hitter on road ... 17 multi-hit gms, 10 multi-RBI ... 22 starts in RF, 16 in 7-hole.

Steve Andres – 7 RBI in last 7 games, despite hitting just 6-for-24 (.250) ... 4 starts in 3-hole298 hitter on road.

Joe Thaman – 2-for-11 last 3 (.182) ... 5-for-27 career BET (.185, 2 R, 3 RBI, 2 BB, 5 Ks, 2-2 SB, SAC).

Matt Bransfield – dnp vs. WVU300 hitter on road.

Craig Cooper – dnp vs. WVU329 hitter on road.

Greg Lopez – def. Sub vs. WVU240 hitter on road.

ND vs. Shaun Parker ('03)

Sollmann (0-for-2) – 4-3, HBP/SB, 6-3

Edwards (1-for-3) – 6-3, 1B-4, 6-3

Rizzo (0-for-2) – KS, KS, HBP

Bransfield (2-for-3) – 1B-1, 1B-7, P-4

Lopez (0-for-2) – 4-3, 1-3, BB

Cooper (0-for-2) – F-8 LC, BB, F-7 LC

Billmaier (0-for-1) – BB, FF-3, BB

Macri (1-for-3) – F-8 LC, 1B-6, FF-3

Sanchez (0-for-2) – KS, P-6 LL

Nettey (1-for-1) – 1B-5 (pinch-hit)

STRONG UP THE MIDDLE – Notre Dame boasts the only pair of middle infielders who each received 2003 preseason All-America honors, with junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** earning a second-team nod from the National College Baseball Writers Association while sophomore SS **Matt Macri** (who saw most of his freshman season cut short by an elbow injury that ultimately required "Tommy John" reconstructive surgery) was a *Baseball America* third team preseason All-American ... *BA* and the BIG EAST coaches forecasted Sollmann as the 2003 BIG EAST player of the year while *Collegiate Baseball* magazine predicted Macri for that honor ... three other 2B and five SS were named to at least one of the three major preseason All-America teams (which featured 10 total middle infielders) ... Southern University 2B Rickie Weeks and Florida State SS Stephen Drew were unanimous first-team picks (also *CB*) while Texas 2B Tim Moss was the only other middle infielder named to all three teams ... middle infielders cited on two of the preseason teams also included Georgia Tech SS Eric Patterson, Eastern Michigan 2B Brian Bixler and Louisiana State SS Aaron Hill ... two other shortstops – Richmond's David Reaver and USC's Anthony Lunetta – also received preseason All-America honors.

NOTRE DAME BASEBALL 2003 PRESEASON HONORS AND RANKINGS

John Axford (So., RHP) – Nation's #19 college prospect (11th pitcher) for 2004 draft (*Baseball America*/Perfect Game, 12/15/02), BIG EAST's #5 overall prospect (*BA*)

Craig Cooper (Fr., CF) – BIG EAST's #2 newcomer and nation's #50 newcomer (*BA*)

Matt Macri (So., SS) – Preseason third team All-American (*BA*), preseason BIG EAST player of the year (*Collegiate Baseball*), nation's #40 college prospect (#2 among SS) for 2003 draft (*BA*/Perfect Game, 12/15/02), preseason all-BE (*BA*), BE's #3 overall prospect and best IF arm (*BA*)

Chris Niesel (So. RHP) – Preseason all-BIG EAST (*BA*), nation's #49 college prospect for 2004 draft (*BA*/Perfect Game, 12/15/02), preseason all-BIG EAST (*BA*), BE's #6 overall prospect, best breaking ball (*BA*)

Steve Sollmann (Jr., 2B) – Preseason second team All-American (National College Baseball Writers), preseason BIG EAST player of the year (BIG EAST coaches and *BA*), #124 college prospect for 2003 draft (*BA*/PG, 12/15/02), preseason all-BIG EAST (coaches; *BA*), BE's #7 overall prospect (*BA*), best defensive 2B (*BA*)

Joe Thaman (Jr., 1B) – BIG EAST's best defensive 1B (*Baseball America*)

Martin Vergara (So., RHP) – Nation's #78 college prospect for 2004 draft (*BA*/Perfect Game, 12/15/02), BIG EAST's #8 overall prospect (*BA*)

Grant Johnson (So., RHP; inj.) – Nation's #5 college prospect for 2004 draft (*BA*/PG, 12/15/02), preseason third team All-American (*Collegiate Baseball*, NCBWA), preseason all-BIG EAST (coaches, *BA*), BE's #1 prospect and best control pitcher (*BA*)