

NOTRE DAME FENCING NOTES

OHIO STATE DUALS – Jan. 25, 2003

THE USUAL SUSPECTS – The Notre Dame men's and women's fencing teams will open their 2003 season this weekend in a familiar position, as one of the leading candidates to contend for the NCAA Championship – with both Irish teams earning their respective No. 2 national rankings in the United States Fencing Coaches Association (USFCA) preseason poll.

EARLY TESTS – Notre Dame's six regular-season tournaments include two major showdowns in the first two weeks: a matchup with growing regional rival Ohio State at this weekend's Ohio State Duals (Jan. 25) and a showdown vs. defending national champion Penn State next week's Notre Dame Duals (Feb. 1-2) ... the Nittany Lions own the top spots in both USFCA preseason polls while OSU is fourth in both polls, behind 2002 NCAA runner-up St. John's (the Irish and Red Storm are not slated to do battle in 2003, after highly-anticipated ND-SJU showdowns in the previous two seasons) ... ND and OSU also are slated to meet at the Michigan State Duals (Feb. 22), plus the annual Midwest Fencing Conference Championships (March 1-2, at ND) and the Midwest Regional (March 8-9, at OSU).

THIS WEEKEND'S SCHEDULE

(all bouts at Ohio State's French Fieldhouse)

ND vs. Case Western (8:00 a.m.)

ND vs. Minnesota (9:30 a.m.)

ND vs. Lawrence (11:00 a.m.)

ND vs. Florida (1:00 p.m.)

ND vs. Ohio State (2:30 p.m.)

ND vs. Cleveland State (4:00 p.m.)

SCOUTING THE IRISH – Notre Dame returns 10 of 12 competitors (eight of them All-Americans) from its group of 2002 NCAA competitors that claimed a third-place national finish, with the top losses to graduation including All-America sabres Andre Crompton and Carianne McCullough ... the Irish has significant depth at several weapons in 2003, with 12 veterans having combined for 29 previous All-America finishes at the NCAAs ... leading the way among the returners are a trio of three-time All-Americans – women's epee captain **Anna Carnick** men's foil captain **Ozren Debic** and men's epee captain **Jan Viviani**.

ELITE TRIO – Notre Dame owns the unique distinction of boasting three former NCAA champions, as junior women's epeeist **Kerry Walton** and sophomore foilist **Alicja Kryczalo** return after claiming NCAA titles in 2002 while men's sabre **Gabor Szelle** (the 1999 NCAA runner-up and 2000 NCAA champ) has rejoined the Notre Dame program to help fill the men's sabre spots vacated by graduated All-Americans Andre Crompton and Andrzej Bednarski Szelle also was the NCAA runner-up in 1999 (he did not compete in the '01 or '02 NCAAs) while Walton did not compete with the Irish during the 2001 spring season.

DEPTH CHARGES – The Irish depth in 2003 includes three former All-Americans at three different weapons: men's foil, women's epee and women's foil (teams can qualify a maximum of two fencers per weapon for the NCAAs) ... senior foilist **Forest Walton** (9th-place All-American in '01, after placing 14th in '00) has returned after studying abroad in 2002, combining with senior captain **Ozren Debic** (2000 NCAA runner-up, 5th in '01, 4th in '02) and sophomore **Derek Snyder** (7th in '02) to give the Irish three All-America men's foilists for 2003 ... others who have posted All-American finishes at some point in their careers include the women's foil trio of sophomores **Alicja Kryczalo** (2002 NCAA champ) and **Andrea Ament** (2002 NCAA runner-up) and senior captain **Liza Boutsikaris** (12th in 2000, 16th in '01) ... the women's epee All-Americans are led by seniors **Anna Carnick** (9th, 12th and 10th at 2000-02 NCAAs) and **Meagan Call** (12th in '00, 5th in '01), plus junior **Kerry Walton** ('02 NCAA champ) ... senior captain **Jan Viviani** (3rd at the 2000 and '01 NCAAs, 5th in '02) and sophomore **Michal Sobieraj** (10th in '02) form one of the nation's top men's epee tandems ... three members of the Irish sabre squads – senior Matt Fabricant ('02), junior **Destanie Milo** ('01, '02) and her classmate **Maggie Jordan** ('01) – also have past experience competing at the NCAAs (Jordan doing so in foil).

SABRE A QUESTION MARK – The Notre Dame men's and women's teams boast a combined five former All-Americans in epee and six in foil – with senior **Gabor Szelle** representing the only sabre All-American on the current Irish squads ... senior Matt Fabricant competed in the 2002 NCAAs while junior women's sabre captain **Destanie Milo** was a 2001 and '02 NCAA participant ... Milo is a late scratch for this weekend's Ohio State Duals (due to illness), with her classmate **Maggie Jordan** looking to pick up the slack ... Jordan fenced in the 2001 NCAA foil competition before shifting to sabre in 2002 (when Milo and '02 graduate Carianne McCullough were ND's NCAA representatives).

SCOUTING THE BUCKEYES – Ohio State returns nine of 10 competitors from its 2002 NCAA Championship squad that finished fourth in the overall competition ... defending NCAA women's sabre runner-up Louise Bond-Williams leads OSU's

six returning All-Americans, with other top women's returners including twin sophomore foilists Hannah and Metta Thompson and epeeist Alexandra Shklar ... OSU boasts one of the nation's top men's sabre tandems, with sophomore Jason Rogers placing third at the 2002 NAAs while junior Colin Parker was eighth at the '02 NAAs ... OSU's other NCAA returners include foilist Nathan Weir and epeeists Brian Gross and Spencer Jones ... freshman sabre Adam Crompton (brother of former ND All-American Andre Crompton) and epeeist Talia Viggers join a squad that lost just one NCAA competitor (sabre Leah Tracy) from its 2002 team.

TOP MEN'S MATCHUPS TO WATCH IN THE ND-OSU BOUTS:

*** Matt Fabricant vs. Colin Parker (sabre)**

– Fabricant beat Parker at the 2002 OSU Duals but Parker won a meeting at the '01 Duke Duals, with Parker winning tight 2002 postseason meetings at the Midwest Regional and the NAAs (both 5-4)

*** Matt Fabricant vs. Jason Rogers (sabre)**

– Rogers won all three of his bouts vs. Fabricant in 2002: at the OSU Duals (5-0), at the Midwest Regional and at the NAAs (5-2)

*** ND duo vs. Spencer Jones (epee)**

– **Jan Viviani** has won four of their last five meetings, including 5-2 in the '01 regular season and three '02 wins (15-5 in the Midwest Fencing Conference title bout, 5-1 at the Midwest Regional and 5-4 in the NAAs) ... Jones posted a 5-4 win over Viviani at the 2001 OSU Duals.

– **Michal Sobieraj** beat Jones at the 2002 Midwest Regional (5-3) but lost to him in the NAAs (5-2)

*** ND duo vs. Brian Gross (epee)**

– Viviani beat Gross at the '02 OSU Duals (5-2), before dropping 5-4 bout vs. Gross at both the Midwest Regional (Gross placed 3rd, behind the ND fencers), and the NAAs

– Sobieraj lost to Gross at the '02 Regional (his only loss), also losing at the NAAs (5-3)

*** ND duo vs. Nathan Weir (foil)**

– **Ozren Debic** beat Weir at the 2002 Midwest Regional (5-0) and the NAAs (5-1)

– **Derek Snyder** lost to Weir at the '02 Regional (5-3) but posted a 5-1 win over him at the NAAs

TOP WOMEN'S MATCHUPS TO WATCH IN THE ND-OSU BOUTS:

*** ND duo vs. Hannah Thompson (foil)**

– **Alicja Kryczalo** won all five of her bouts vs. Hannah in 2002, at the OSU Duals (5-1), twice at the Midwest Regional (5-2, 5-3 in fence-off) and twice in the NAAs (5-2 and 15-5 in the semifinals)

– **Andrea Ament** beat Hannah at the 2002 OSU Duals (5-2) and lost to her at the Regional (5-4) before posting a 5-2 win at the NAAs

*** ND duo vs. Metta Thompson (foil)**

– **Kryczalo** suffered one of just three losses in the 2002 college season vs. Metta at the Midwest Regional (5-2), after beating her at the OSU Duals (5-2) and later winning at the NAAs (5-1)

– **Ament** beat Metta at the '02 OSU Duals (5-1), lost to her at the Regional and added a key 5-4 win at the NAAs

*** ND duo vs. Alexandra Shklar (epee)**

– **Kerry Walton** beat Shklar at the '02 OSU Duals (5-2) and the NAAs (5-4) but lost to her at the Midwest Regional (5-2)

– **Anna Carnick** posted a pair of 5-1 wins over Shklar in 2001 (regular season and NAAs) but Shklar won all three of their 2002 bouts (5-2 at the OSU Duals, 5-4 at the Midwest Regional and 5-4 at the NAAs)

AFCA 2003 PRESEASON COACHES POLL (2003 opponents in italics)

Men

1. Penn State
2. Notre Dame
3. St. John's
4. Ohio State
5. Princeton
6. Stanford
7. Columbia
8. Harvard
9. Pennsylvania
10. Yale

Also receiving votes: NYU, Rutgers, Brandeis, *Air Force*, Duke, *Wayne State*, *North Carolina*

Women

1. *Penn State*
2. **Notre Dame**
3. St. John's
4. *Ohio State*
5. Princeton
6. Columbia-Barnard
7. *Northwestern*
8. Temple
9. Yale
10. Pennsylvania

Also receiving votes: Stanford, Harvard, Rutgers, Brandeis, *North Carolina*, Duke, MIT, Brandeis

NATIONAL TOP-TEAM RETURNERS (see ND and OSU above)

* **Penn State** returns an impressive nine All-Americans, led by '02 NCAA foil champ Nontapat Panchan ... other returning PSU All-Americans include men's foilist Ian Schlaepfer (8th), women's foilists Marta Grochal (9th) and Meredith Chin (12th), men's epeeist Adam Wiercoch (4th), women's epeeist Jessica Burke (5th), men's sabres Alex Weber (4th) and Amir Rahimi (7th), and women's sabre Heather Brosnan (6th) ... PSU will look to fill the gaps left by the departure of three All-Americans: '02 NCAA women's epee runner-up Stephanie Eim, men's epeeist Daniel Landgren (12th) and women's sabre Stephanie Tam (9th) ... top newcomers include Katarzyna Trzopek (women's foil) and Marten Zagunis (men's sabre, finished second to Weber at the PSU Open last fall).

* **St. John's** returns nine of its 11 All-Americans from the 2002 NAAs, including national champions Arpad Horvath (men's epee) and Ivan Lee (men's sabre) ... other returning All-Americans are Irina Khouade (women's foil, 4th), Elizabeth Thottham (women's foil, 11th) Anton Gurevich (men's epee, 6th), Arlene Stevens (women's epee, 7th), Christina Crane (women's sabre, 5th), Julia Gelman (women's sabre, 3rd) and Darin Whitmer (men's sabre, 6th) ... SJU looks to replace the loss of 2002 NCAA men's foil runner-up Jon Tiomkin and All-American women's epeeist Emese Takacs (4th), along with 2001 All-Americans Alex Roytblat (men's epee), Doron Levit (men's epee) and Marisa Mustilli (women's sabre) ... top newcomers are Nitai Kfir (men's foil), Anthony Mattera (men's foil), Angela Miranda (women's foil) and Katarzyna Wieronski (women's sabre).

* **Princeton** could surprise in 2003, despite losing All-America women's epeeists Lindsay Campbell (6th), Maya Lawrence (9th) and men's epeeist Matt Fitzgerald (19th) ... the Tigers return former NCAA champion and 2002 men's epee runner-up Soren Thompson, plus 2002 NCAA competitors Eddie Chou (men's sabre, 17th), Catherine Pack (women's sabre, 16th) and Eric Stodola (men's foil, 21st) ... the women's squad will rely on highly-rated newcomers Kamara James (epee), Eleanor Leighton (epee) and Jacqueline Leahy (foil).