

## NOTRE DAME BASEBALL NCAA GAMEDAY NOTES VS. ARIZONA (MAY 30, 2003)

The third-seeded Notre Dame baseball team heads into today's matchup versus No. 2 regional seed Arizona looking to post its sixth opening-game win in the program's last seven rounds of NCAA Tournament play (including the '02 Super Regional and CWS) ... during the first eight seasons of the Paul Mainieri era, the Irish posted a 7-8 record when facing a higher-seeded team in the NCAAs ... senior RHP Ryan Kalita – who just two years ago was rounding out the 12-player staff for BIG EAST road trips – will get the start for the Irish, after making major strides throughout the 2002 and '03 seasons ... Arizona is expected to counter with junior RHP Richie Gardner (3.84 ERA, 9-2 record, 91 Ks, 37 BB, 110 H in 105.1 IP) ... sophomore RHP and 2003 BIG EAST pitcher of the year Chris Niesel is ND's probable starter for Saturday's second game (vs. host Cal State Fullerton or San Diego), after missing last week's BIG EAST Tournament due to a form of tendonitis in his throwing hand ... the Irish are in the midst of their 11th roadtrip of the season, spanning nearly 23,000 miles of travel ... ND's offense erupted for a .361 team batting avg. last week to help deliver the BIG EAST title.

### 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	3.29	6-1	12/11	0	0	68.1	62	30	25	26	56	10-0-5	293 /.247	5	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>13-1</b>	<b>33/167</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>123.0</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>16-2-8</b>	<b>.257</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>

### Ryan Kalita – 2003 game-by-game (relief vs. Minnesota)

Date	Opponent	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	HR	WP	HB	GO	Score	W-L	ERA
2/23	at Arizona State	3.2	4	4	3	6	3	0	1	1	4	8-14	–	7.36
3/1	vs. Minnesota (M'dome)	3.1	6	3	3	3	0	0	0	1	4	2-8	–	7.71
3/11	at North Florida	7.0	3	1	1	1	6	0	2	1	12	6-1	W	4.50
3/24	at Villanova	8.0	5	1	1	3	7	0	1	0	13	5-1	W	3.27
3/30	Georgetown	6.0	2	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	8	12-5	W	2.57
4/6	at St. John's	7.0	6	2	1	0	4	0	0	0	14	18-3	W	2.31
4/13	at Creighton	4.1	9	9	8	4	3	2	1	1	4	13-12	–	3.89
4/19	Seton Hall	6.0	3	3	3	1	6	0	0	0	8	4-3	W	3.97
4/26	Connecticut	5.0	7	2	2	1	5	0	0	2	5	3-2	–	3.93
5/4	West Virginia	6.0	5	3	2	0	4	2	0	0	11	1-5	L	3.83
5/11	at Rutgers	5.0	5	1	1	3	6	0	0	0	4	3-5	–	3.67
5/23	vs. Rutgers (BET)	7.0	7	1	0	1	6	0	0	0	10	9-3	W	3.29
<b>Totals</b>		<b>68.1</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>97</b>		<b>6-1</b>	<b>3.29</b>

**Kalita's Nine-Inning Averages in 2003:** 8.2 hits, 3.4 walks, 7.4 Ks, 12.8 groundouts (5.2 IP per start)

**Kalita's Nine-Inning Averages in 2002:** 9.5 hits, 2.3 walks, 7.6 Ks, 9.5 groundouts

**Kalita's Situational Pitching in '03:** .236 opp. batting with runners on, .211 with 2 outs, 32% leadoff batters reached (2.9 per 9 IP)

**Kalita's Situational Pitching in '02:** .215 opp. batting with runners on, .237 with 2 outs, 42% leadoff batters reached (3.8 per 9 IP)

**SECRETS TO HIS SUCCESS** – Senior RHP **Ryan Kalita** ranks as one of ND's top situational pitcher this season, allowing just 32% of leadoff batters to reach (4th-best on the staff) while limiting the opponents to .236 batting with runners on and .211 with 2 outs (both 3rd-best on the staff ... Kalita also owns a team-best 2.7-to-1 groundout-to-flyout ratio (97/36) and has recorded 75% of his outs (153 of 205) via Ks (56) or GOs – with a 9-inning average of 20.2 outs on Ks or GOs (tops on the staff).

### KALITA NOTES

\* **Last Outing:** scattered 7 H, 1 BB while using typical combination of Ks (6) and groundball outs (12) to account for 18 of 21 outs (2 DPs) in key 9-3 BET win over Rutgers (he now owns a 0.87 career ERA in four career GP vs. the rival Scarlet Knights).

• Finished 3rd among BE pitchers in conference ERA (2.09), with 4-1 conference record and .214 opponent batting in league play ... enters NCAAs ranked 6th among BIG EAST regulars in ERA (3.29), 7th in low opponent batting (.247) and 9th in wins (6-1).

• His last three starts include a 1.50 ERA, a 1-1 record, a 4-to-1 K-to-walk ratio (16/4) and 17 hits allowed in 18 innings ... those outings came in the BIG EAST showdown vs. West Virginia (5-1 loss, 6 IP, 5 H, 3 R/2 ER, 4 Ks), a no-decision in the 5-3, 19-inning loss at rival Rutgers (5 IP, 5 H, R, 3 BB, 6 Ks) loss, and the key winner's bracket win over RU at the BIG EAST Tournament (7.0 IP, 7 H, UER, BB, 6 Ks) ... his scheduled start at Virginia Tech in the final week of the regular season was rained out.

• Has posted key BIG EAST Tournament wins over Rutgers during the past two seasons, with his only previous NCAA Tournament appearance coming in the 2002 College World Series opener vs. Stanford, logging 1.2 shutout innings in relief of Grant Johnson (H, BB, K) ... would have been a starter in the CWS if the Irish had defeated Stanford three days later and advanced to face eventual champ Texas ... also would have started in the 2002 South Bend Regional if Ohio State has forced a second championship game ...

• Ranks third on staff in wins (6-1), innings (68.1), starts(11), strikeouts (56) and Ks "looking (19) .. also fourth on staff with .258 opponent batting avg. by lefthanded hitters.

• His brother Tim Kalita was a top lefthanded starter with the Irish from 1997-99 (4.00 ERA, 11-3, 214 Ks in 214 IP, 116 BB) and signed with the Detroit Tigers organization as a 7th-round draft pick after his junior season (he pitched with the triple-A Toledo Mud Hens last season, currently with double-A Erie Sea Wolves).

**RIZZO, ANDRES RETURN** – Two ND freshman – RF **Cody Rizzo** (Temecula/Chaparral HS) and DH **Steve Andres** (Napa/Justin Siena HS) – have returned to their home state for the Fullerton Regional while many of their teammates are making their first trip to California (or southern California, with the junior and seniors playing in northern California at the Fresno State Classic) ... Rizzo was a star baseball and soccer player as a prep (his former teammate Ian Etherington has signed to play soccer at ND next season) while another Temecula product, SS Alexis Madrid, has been a top player with the ND softball team during the past four seasons ... Rizzo was the CSTV player of the game in ND's pivotal 9-3 win over Rutgers at the BIG EAST Tournament, after batting 3-for-3 with a key two-run double down the rightfield line, a pair of runs scored, his 25th time hit-by-pitch and a pair of stellar plays in the field.

**TOMMY AND TOMMY** – ND head coach Paul Mainieri's son (and team batboy) Tommy Mainieri is named after his godfather Tommy Lasorda, a longtime friend of the Mainieri family and supporter of the Irish baseball team (see p. 8 of media guide) ... Lasorda gave a brief speech to the ND team during a Wednesday-night dinner at one of his favorite restaurants, Burger Continental (which served the Irish one of its best all-around meals in recent memory) ... he also spoke at the pep rally before a 2001 ND-Tennessee football game and was the keynote speaker at the ND Baseball program's 2001 "Opening-Night Dinner" (attended by nearly 1,000 season-ticket holders) ... Lasorda also caught up with the Irish at a team breakfast during the 2003 CWS – where his namesake Tommy Mainieri became a favorite of the various camera crews and jumbotron operators.

**PRIMETIME PLAYERS** – Two Notre Dame veterans – senior CF **Kris Billmaier** and junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** – will be looking to resume their NCAA postseason domination, after leading the Irish to the 2002 College World Series with a combined .667 batting average in the 2002 Regional and Super Regional rounds (36-for-54; Billmaier 16-for-26 and Sollmann 20-for-28) ... Sollmann was named MVP of the South Bend Regional after batting 13-for-16 (.813) with 8 RBI, 10 runs scored and 20 total bases in two wins over Ohio State and the record-setting 25-1 win over the Regional's top seed South Alabama ... Sollmann's dominating game vs. South Alabama (6-for-7, 7 RBI, 6 R, 3-run HR, 2 3B, 13 TB) included setting an NCAA Tournament record for runs in a game (tying ND record) while also tying the NCAA Tournament and ND hit records and matching the NCAA Tournament triples mark ... Billmaier's biggest game was a 4-for-5, 5-RBI effort in the 10-4 opening win at Florida State during the Super Regional series.

**TWO OF THE BEST** – **Kris Billmaier** (.471, 33-for-70, 9 R, 17 RBI, 3B, 7 2B, 9 BB in 19 GP) and **Steve Sollmann** (.459, 28-for-61, 18 R, 14 RBI, HR, 3 3B, 2B, 5 BB, 3 SB in 14 GP) own the **second and third-best** career **NCAA** Tournament batting **averages in ND history** (min. 20 ABs), trailing only the .514 (19-for-37) posted by C/IF Matt Haas during the 1992-94 NCAAAs (6 R, 15 RBI, HR, 2B, 3 BB) ... Billmaier's career NCAA Tournament batting avg. is **202 points above his career average** in all other games (.269) while Sollmann owns a .365 overall career batting avg. (8th in ND history, including .355 in non-NCAA games).

**ALL-REGIONAL REGULAR** – **Kris Billmaier** has the chance to become the third ND baseball player ever named to three NCAA All-Regional teams, with C Paul O'Toole ('99, '00, '02) and SS Alec Porzel ('99-'01) previously earning three All-Regional honors ... Billmaier was named to the 2000 Starkville All-Regional team (.533, 8-for-15, R, 4 RBI, 2B, 2 BB) and the 2002 South Bend All-Regional team (.462, 18-for-39, 6 R, 9 RBI, 3B, 3 2B, 3 BB) ... Billmaier and current sophomore RHP Grant Johnson (sidelined following preseason shoulder surgery) are the only ND players ever named to an all-Regional team as freshmen.

**BOTTOM OF ORDER PRODUCES AT BET** – Notre Dame's .361 team batting avg. at last week's BIG EAST Tournament was led by a strong showing from the 7-8-9 batters, as freshman RF **Cody Rizzo** (6-for-13, 6 R, 4 RBI, 3 BB, 3 HBP, K), junior C and tournament MVP **Javi Sanchez** (8-for-11, 5 R, 6 RBI, 3 2B, 4 BB, 4 SAC, 35 of 36 innings behind the plate) and junior 1B **Joe Thaman** (4-for-14, 5 RBI, HR, SAC, 3 Ks) – plus freshman 3B **Greg Lopez** (1-for-4, R, 2 Ks, one start in 9-hole) – combined to hit .452 (19-for-42) with 13 runs scored, 15 RBI and 25 total bases (.595 slugging) ... the 7-9 starters also reached base on 7 walks and 3 HBPs, with 5 sac. bunts, just 6 Ks (one every 7 ABs) and no errors in the field ... Sanchez set a BET record for batting (.727, 8-for-11) while getting the job done on eight other plate appearances (4 BB, 4 SAC) and having a hand in 11 of ND's 40 runs in the four tournament games (6 RBI, 5 runs).

**NCAA GAMES IN THE MAINIERI ERA** – Notre Dame posted a 14-11 record in NCAA Tournament games during the first eight seasons of the Paul Mainieri era ('95-'02), including a 6-3 mark in 2002 (7-4 in last 11 NCAA games, 10-6 in last 16) ... the Irish are 7-8 in Mainieri-era NCAA games when facing a higher seed, with wins over Virginia (12-1, '96), Tulane (8-4 and 10-6, '00), South Alabama (25-1, in '02), Florida State (10-4 and 3-1 in '02) and Rice (5-3, '02).

**STRONG STARTERS** – Notre Dame owns an all-time record of 10-10 in NCAA Tournament openers (all rounds), including six straight opening wins before dropping a 4-3 battle vs. Stanford in the 2002 CWS ... prior to that, the Irish had won all six of their NCAA openers – by an average score of 10-3 (58-20 overall) – in the Paul Mainieri era: vs. Virginia at the 1996 South I Regional (12-1, played at Alabama), vs. Creighton at the 1999 South Bend Regional (8-1), vs. Tulane at the 2000 Starkville Regional (8-4), vs. Wisconsin-Milwaukee at the '01 SBR (12-4), vs. Ohio State at the '02 SBR (8-6) and at Florida State in the '02 Super Regionals (10-4) ... ND was the lower seed in three of the above wins (vs. UVa, Tulane and FSU).

**FAMILIAR TERRITORY** – Notre Dame has plenty of history when it comes to posting upset NCAA wins on the opponent's home field – many times in some of college baseball's most hostile environments – doing so six times in the previous 11 seasons: at Miami (6-3, in '92), at Florida State (4-3 in '93, 10-4 and 3-1 in '02), at Clemson (8-1, '94) and at Mississippi State (7-0, in '00).

**TOURNEY-TESTED** – ND is the only team at the Fullerton Regional coming off a full conference tournament, as the Pac-10 and Big West do not sponsor postseason tournaments while USD won a three-game WCC postseason series vs. Pepperdine ... Arizona closed by dropping three games to Arizona State while Fullerton was busy battling Big West regular-season champ Long Beach State.

**IRISH AND WILDCATS TO TANGLE AGAIN** – Friday's game will mark the third postseason meeting between teams from Notre Dame and Arizona in recent weeks ... the ND women's basketball team opened 2003 NCAA Tournament play with a win over Arizona (at Kansas State) while the Irish men's basketball team saw its NCAA run come to an end with a loss to Arizona in the round of 16 (at The Pond in Anaheim).

**SOLLMANN, GAGNE NAMED ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS** – Two of ND's all-BIG EAST Conference performers – junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** (Cincinnati, Ohio) and senior **RHP J.P. Gagne** (Bloomington, Minn.) – have been named to the 2003 Verizon Academic All-America team for Division I baseball, as selected by the College Sports Information Directors of America ... it marks the **fourth straight year that ND has produced two Academic All-Americans**, a stretch **unmatched** in all of Division I baseball ... Sollmann was one of 11 players named to the Academic All-America second team while Gagne was one of two pitchers named to the third team ... ND joined three others schools – Nebraska, Columbia and Rice – with multiple players among the 33 honorees (each had two) ... **Sollmann** just posted his second consecutive Dean's List **semester (3.67 GPA)** and carries a **3.30 cumulative GPA as a marketing major** ... **Gagne graduated with a 3.40 GPA as a finance major**, including a **4.0** during the 2003 spring semester to go along with three previous Dean's List semesters ... ND is one of **eight current NCAA Tournament teams that produced '03 Academic All-Americans**, with the others including Nebraska, Baylor, Lamar, Rice, Miami, Alabama and Wichita State ... ND's four-year run of multiple Academic All-Americans began in 2000 with IF **Jeff Perconte** (1st team) and LHP **Mike Naumann** (3rd), followed by Naumann (1st) and OF Brian Stavisky (3rd team) in '01 and then Stavisky (3rd) and 3B Andrew Bushey (2nd) in '02 ... ND baseball players now have combined for 21 Academic All-America awards (since '77), including five repeaters in OFs John Loughran ('86, '87), Dan Peltier ('88, '89) and Stavisky ('01, '02), 1B Joe Binkiewicz ('91-'92) and Naumann ('00-'01) ... Sollmann and Gagne also are under consideration for All-America honors and could join Peltier as the only ND players to couple All-America and Academic All-America.

**SIXTEEN IRISH PLAYERS POST 3.0-PLUS GPAs IN SPRING** – It was another strong showing in the classroom for many members of the Notre Dame baseball team, with a 2.95 team GPA in the 2003 spring semester including 16 players with semester GPAs of 3.0-plus (seven of them freshmen), plus nine players with GPAs above 3.20 (seven at 3.40-plus) ... ND's 16 players who posted a 3.0 GPA during the 2003 spring term included seven veterans: senior RHP **J.P. Gagne** (4.0, finance), senior 1B **Mike Holba** (3.75, political science/anthropology), senior RHPs **Matt Laird** (3.17, graduated with a 3.34; accounting) and **Peter Ogilvie** (3.42, graduated with a 3.23; product design), junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** (3.67, marketing), junior IFs **Tim Murray** (3.67, mathematics) and **Zach Sisko** (3.54, pre-professional Arts and Letters/history), junior C **Javi Sanchez** (3.15; management) and junior LHP **Cody Wilkins** (3.19, marketing/philosophy) ... the seven freshmen who posted a 3.0-plus included DHs **Steve Andres** (3.40) and **Matt Bransfield** (3.07), OFs **Brennan Grogan** (3.17, after 3.67 in fall) and **Alex Nettey** (3.20), 3B **Greg Lopez** (3.24) and LHPs **Tom Thornton** (3.19, after 3.33 in fall) and **Matt Arminio** (3.13, after 3.53 in fall) ... all ND freshmen are enrolled in the unique First Year of Studies program ... senior RHP **Brandon Vilorio** graduated with a 3.62 cumulative GPA as an electrical engineering major.

**MORE ON SOLLMANN ...** – Academic All-American Steve Sollmann recently became the sixth ND player ever to receive **three-plus all-BIG EAST Conference honors** (1st team in '01, 2nd team in '02 and '03) ... he currently ranks **13th in the nation with 33 stolen bases** while **leading the BIG EAST in overall runs (64)** and ranking **2nd in total bases (126), hits (88) and triples (5, plus 7th with 16 doubles)** ... Sollmann also ranks 2nd among ND players in batting (.370) and slugging (.529), plus 3rd in on-base (.426), walks (23) and HRs (4) and 4th in RBI (37) while totaling more walks than strikeouts (21) ... situationally, Sollmann owns a team-best .532 leadoff on-base pct. (.532) and ranks 3rd on the team in batting with runners in scoring position (.371) ... he has totaled **just eight errors** in 57 games played in '03 while helping the Irish post a team-record .971 season fielding pct. ... his **.365 career batting avg.** ranks 8th in the ND record book while he already ranks among ND's all-time leaders in SBs (6th, 62), fielding assists (6th, 489), hits (10th, 245), runs (11th, 169) and triples (11th, 11) ... Sollmann also recently became a rare junior-year recipient of ND's **Francis Patrick O'Connor Award** (recognizing student-athletes who most embody "team spirit, inspiration, courage," etc.) and is the **first player ever named BIG EAST player of the week three times in the same season** (also tying the BIG EAST career mark).

**MORE ON GAGNE ...** – Academic All-American **J.P. Gagne** – who also has received a **\$2,000 postgraduate scholarship** from the BIG EAST – is the third ND pitcher ever to earn multiple **all-BIG EAST honors** (3rd team in '01 and '03), after posting the **BIG EAST's 2nd-best ERA in '03 conference games (1.09)** ... he also has set the **ND record for saves in a season (12; 8th in nation)** while his 28 appearances in '03 rank 4th in the ND record book and his **92 career games pitched** have tied Chris Michalak's team record ... Gagne also leads the Irish pitching regulars in lowest opponent batting avg. by lefthanded hitters (.181) while ranking 2nd in groundball outs per 9 IP (12.0), 3rd in lowest opponent slugging (.277, just 2 home runs allowed) and 4th in ERA (2.61), wins (4-5), Ks (45) and opponent batting (.236) ... Gagne earlier this season joined Michalak and Aaron Heilman as the only ND pitchers ever to post **20-plus wins (25-15; 8th on ND wins list)** and **10-plus saves (18, two shy of John Corbin's record)** ... he also ranks 8th in the ND record book for innings (296.2) and 9th in Ks (205) ... his 33 career starts include last week's **win over West Virginia** in the BIG EAST Tournament opener (his **first start since March 6, 2002**), when he pushed his streak of **not allowing an earned run to 25 IP** ... Gagne's excellent control in '03 includes just 14 traditional walks (plus seven intentional) in 58.2 IP while he has not hit a batter and has totaled just three wild pitches ... he has closed 23 of his 27 relief appearances in '03 while converting 12 of 14 save opportunities.

**ROADTRIPPERS DELUXE** – Notre Dame's long trek to southern California is nothing new, as ND will have traversed some 23,000 miles during its 11 roadtrips to date ... ND opened with 17 straight road games, covering roughly 8,600 miles in trips to Arizona, Minnesota, Florida and Pennsylvania ... the Fullerton trip marks ND's fourth straight week on the road, spanning nearly 10,000 miles ... here's a look at the roadtrip mileage of ND's 2003 roadtrips (some include bus rides with flights originating from Chicago):

<b>ND Baseball's 2003 Roadtrips</b>	<b>Miles</b>
Tempe, Ariz. (ASU).....	4,026
Minneapolis, Minn. (DQ Classic) .....	1,220
Jacksonville, Fla. (Kennel Clubs Classic) .....	2,052
Villanova, Pa. (Villanova) .....	1,340
Boston, Mass./Jamaica, N.Y. (St. John's).....	1,938
Omaha, Neb. (vs. Creighton) .....	677
Grand Rapids, Mich. (vs. Michigan) .....	244
Piscataway, N.J. (Rutgers) .....	1,750
Blacksburg, Va. (Virginia Tech) .....	1,414
Bridgewater, N.J. (BIG EAST Tournament) .....	1,362
Fullerton, Calif. (NCAAs).....	4,776
<b>Totals.....</b>	<b>22,737</b>

**VS. THE CONFERENCES** – Notre Dame owns a **14-22** all-time record **vs. the current Pac-10** schools (4-4 in the Mainieri era), plus **3-5 vs. the Big West** and **5-1 vs. the WCC** ... ND's most-common Pac-10 opponents have included Washington (5-3, 1-1 Mainieri era), California (3-2), ASU (2-5/1-2) and Arizona (0-5), plus 2-0 vs. Washington State (1-0 PM era), 1-1 vs. UCLA, 1-2 vs. USC (1-1) and 0-1 vs. Oregon State ... ND's records vs. Big West teams include 1-0 vs. UCSB and UOP, 1-2 vs. Long Beach, 0-1 vs. UC Riverside and 0-2 vs. Fullerton ... the Irish have won their only games vs. WCC teams USD, Pepperdine (14-5 at '95 Anaheim Classic, in Paul Mainieri's first ND win) and LMU, plus a 2-0 mark vs. Portland (including 7-6 in title game at 2001 Fresno State Classic) and 0-1 vs. Santa Clara.

### **2003 BIG EAST AWARD NOTES**

- Notre Dame sophomore RHP **Chris Niesel** was recognized for his season-long dominance with the BIG EAST Conference pitcher-of-the-year award while sophomore 1B **Matt Edwards** joined Niesel on the all-BIG EAST first team.

- Senior RHP **Ryan Kalita** and junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** were named to the second team while senior closer **J.P. Gagne** and senior CF **Kris Billmaier** received third-team honors ... ND's six honorees were second only to West Virginia's seven, among the 37 total players who received all-BIG EAST honors ... it marked the third time that three ND pitchers have been honored by the postseason BIG EAST awards (also in 1998 and 2001).

- Notre Dame has produced four of the last six BIG EAST pitchers of the year, with Niesel joining Brad Lidge ('98) and Aaron Heilman ('00, '01) ... ND now owns the most BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-year honors in the league's 18 years of baseball play (Seton Hall and Providence have three each).

- **Sollmann** is the sixth ND player ever to receive three-plus all-BIG EAST honors, after garnering first-team honors in 2001 and second team in '02 ... others to be three- or four-time honorees include DH Jeff Wagner ('96-'99), IF Brant Ust ('97-'99), Heilman ('98-'01) and OFs Steve Stanley ('99, '01-'02) and Brian Stavisky ('00-'02).

- **Gagne** repeated the third-team honors he received as a sophomore and is the third ND pitcher ever to earn multiple all-BIG EAST honors, joining Heilman and Darin Schmalz (2nd team in '96 and '97) in that distinction.

- The awards held special significance for Edwards – who has completed a comeback from a broken leg that sidelined him for most of the 2002 season – and Kalita, a former recruited walk-on who has emerged as one of the team's top starting pitchers.

- **Niesel's** BIG EAST dominance included a 7-0 record and 2.58 ERA in eight league starts, plus a .247 opponent batting average and better than an 8-to-1 strikeout-to-walk ratio (49/6) in those eight BIG EAST games. He joined WVU's Zac Cline (9-2) as the only pitchers to post seven league wins while BC's Kevin Shephard and Chris Lambert (both 2.36) were the only full-time starters with better ERA's in conference action. Niesel nearly averaged one strikeout per inning in BIG EAST play (49 in 52.1) while averaging just 1.03 walks per nine innings in conference games (his 49 Ks were 4th-best in the league).

- In overall games, Niesel ranked fourth among BIG EAST pitchers with a 2.69 ERA (Shephard was the only starter better, at 2.44) while also ranking second in wins (9-1, behind Cline's 11-3), third in Ks (82, behind the 88 posted by Lambert and Cline), sixth in lowest opponent batting average (.233) and second in innings pitched (90.1). His nine-inning averages in the 2003 regular season included just 8.0 hits and 1.5 walks allowed per nine innings, with 8.2 Ks per 9 IP and a 5.5 K-to-walk ratio (82/15).

- **Edwards** – ND's first 1B ever to be named all-BIG EAST – shared the BIG EAST overall RBI lead with Virginia Tech sophomore catcher Wyatt Toregas (60) while his 26 RBI in BIG EAST games tied VT senior second baseman Marc Tugwell for best in the conference (with Tugwell playing two more games). Edwards also finished the regular season ranked fifth among BIG EAST player in total bases (124), sixth in overall hits (73), seventh in slugging. His other season stats included team-bests in batting average (.372) and on-base percentage (.436) and 21 walks.

- **Gagne's** 1.09 ERA in conference action was second-best among BIG EAST pitchers, with his overall stats including a team-record 12 saves, three wins, a 2.10 ERA and a .225 opponent batting average.

- **Billmaier** also ranked among the BIG EAST doubles leaders (15) while batting .264 in the regular season, with 37 RBI, four home runs and 22 walks. He becomes the fifth ND outfielder to earn all-BIG EAST honors, joining 1st-team CFs Scott Sollmann ('96) and Randall Brooks ('97), Stanley and Stavisky in that regard.

- **Kalita** is the seventh ND pitcher to receive all-BIG EAST honors, following Schmalz, Lidge, Heilman, Alex Shilliday (2nd, '98), Danny Tamayo (1st, '01) and Gagne.

**EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE** – Notre Dame started three freshman RHPs (Grant Johnson, Chris Niesel and John Axford) in four games at the 2002 BIG EAST Tournament but the Irish have used a different formula last week at the 2003 BET, with Johnson and Niesel sidelined due to injuries while Axford closed the regular season with three rocky outings (18.75 ERA, 0-3, 7.2 IP, 12 H, 11 BB, 7 WP, 2 HB, 7 Ks) ... as a result, the Irish relied on their most experienced pitchers by starting four senior RHPs (**J.P. Gagne, Ryan Kalita, Peter Ogilvie** and **Matt Laird**), with Gagne, Kalita and Laird picking up the wins in the 2003 BET ... Gagne and Kalita first earned roster spots as freshman walk-ons in the 2000 season while Ogilvie did not even pitch that season after a series of injuries that dated back to his sophomore season at Stevenson HS (in the Chicago area) ... Gagne made the most out of his first start since March 6, 2002, while Laird's first start since 2000 saw him log a career-best nine innings in the title game ... Laird (9 IP, 9 H, 3 R/2 ER, BB, 6 Ks, 18 groundball outs) combined with Gagne (7 IP, 6 H, R, BB, 9 Ks, 6 GOs, LO) and Ryan Kalita (Friday vs. RU, 7 IP, 7 H, UER, BB, 6 Ks, 12 GOs) for the following impressive numbers at the BET: a 1.17 combined ERA, 3-0 record, 23.0 IP, 22 H, 5 R/3 ER, 3 BB, 21 Ks, 36 GOs and 2 lineouts ... 59 of their 69 outs came via Ks, GOs or lineouts.

**BIG-INNING BOPPERS** – ND's 17-game midseason winning streak included 10 "big innings" of five-plus runs but those flurries had dried up in recent weeks, with just five big innings in the 24 games before the 6-run eruption in the 5th inning of the first BIG EAST Tournament game vs. Rutgers at last week's BIG EAST Tournament ... that marked ND's 19th overall inning with 5-plus runs and 11th with 6-plus.

**LAIRD DELIVERS** – With BIG EAST pitcher of the year Chris Niesel sidelined with a finger injury, ND turned to senior reliever **Matt Laird** in the BIG EAST title game ... Laird – whose 67 previous appearances had included just nine starts as a freshman (the last May 3, 2000, vs. Oakland) – allowed just nine balls out of the infield in 37 batters faced, with his 27 outs including 18 via groundballs and six on Ks (plus an infield lineout and just two flyouts) ... he avoided the big inning while scattering nine hits and just one walk over the gutsy 128-pitch outing (81 located for strikes), with one of RU's three runs coming unearned.

**DEFENSIVE-MINDED** – Notre Dame's .971 season fielding pct. remains well on team-record pace (three previous teams posted a .965), with the Irish totaling just **66 errors in 59 games** (1.1 Es per game) ... ND has posted **21 error-free** games, **19 one-error** games and just eight games with three-plus Es ... **unearned runs** have provided the **margin of defeat** for the Irish **just twice** this season, in the 14-8 loss to Arizona State (6 UER) and the 3-1 loss to Ball State (2 UER in the 9th).

**ON A ROLL** – Three key members of the ND batting order enter the NCAAs riding hit streaks of six-plus games: junior 2B and leadoff hitter **Steve Sollman** (9-game hit streak), sophomore 1B/3B **Matt Edwards** (8) and senior CF **Kris Billmaier** (6) ... Edwards typically bats cleanup vs. RHPs (3-hole vs. LHPs) while Billmaier is the cleanup batter vs. lefties (5-hole vs. RHPs) ... junior C **Javi Sanchez** also hit safely in all four games at the BIG EAST Tournament, ending an 0-for-13 slump.

**TAKING 26 FOR THE TEAM** – Freshman RF **Cody Rizzo** (Temecula, Calif.) already has worked his way into the NCAA record book after being hit-by-pitch 26 times this season ... just nine previous Division I players are known to have totaled more HBPs in a season, including Fullerton's David Bacani in 1998 (30; with CSF's Shane Costa totaling 26 HBPs in '02) ... the others in the NCAA record book with 27-plus HBPs include: Richmond's Andrew Slater (33, '97), Fairleigh Dickinson's Steve Dembowski (32, '79), Southern Utah's Chris Nelson (29, '02), ASU's Jonah Martin (29, '00), Nevada's Corky Miller (29, '98), Nebraska's Daniel Bruce (28, '02), UNC's Ryan Earey (28, '00) and FAU's Gabe Somarriba (27 in '01 and '02).

**FRESHMAN FORCE** – Notre Dame's seven freshman position players – OFs **Cody Rizzo**, **Brennan Grogan**, **Craig Cooper** and **Alex Nettey**, DHs **Steve Andres** and **Matt Bransfield** and 3B **Greg Lopez** – have combined to make 213 starts for a 2003 ND squad that had to replace five everyday players that were lost to graduation or the pro draft (all five went on to pro ball) ... the freshmen position players have combined to hit .291 while scoring 177 runs (43% of the team total), with 233 hits (38%), 28 stolen bases (36%) and 8 home runs (27%) ... here's a look at the freshman production:

<b>Combined Freshman Stats</b>	<b>Team Total</b>	<b>Pct.</b>
49 hit-by-pitch	71	69%
11 sac. bunts	52	46%
133 strikeouts	305	44%
<b>177 runs</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>43%</b>
10 triples	24	42%
801 at-bats	2,004	40%
<b>233 hits</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>38%</b>
69 walks	194	36%
<b>28 stolen bases</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>36%</b>
302 total bases	861	35%
<b>8 home runs</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27%</b>
25 doubles	109	23%

**FRESHMAN RECORD BOOK** – Several first-year players have put up some of the top season numbers ever by Notre Dame freshman players ... RF **Cody Rizzo's** 50 runs scored are close to cracking the ND freshman top-3 in that category (Brant Ust scored 66 in '97, Paul O'Toole 55 in '99 and Greg Layson 53 in '91) while his 38 RBI are within range of the 45 posted by Jeff Wagner in '96 and Brian Stavisky in 2000 (Ust holds the ND freshman RBI record, with 54) ... LF **Brennan Grogan's** five triples are the third-most ever by an ND freshman, behind Scott Sollmann (7, '94) and Paul Failla (6, '92) ... LHP **Tom Thornton** (1.84) owns the 4th-best season ERA by an ND freshman with at least 40 IP (Ryan Doherty owns a 1.93 in 23.1 IP) ... Doherty's .209 opponent batting avg. would rank 3rd-best ever by an ND freshman (min. 40 IP), behind Aaron Heilman's .198 in '98 (when he led the nation with a 1.61 ERA and Larry Mohs (.201, '94).

**LOFTY START FOR ROOKIE DUO** – Freshman 6-foot-7 LHP **Tom Thornton** (1.84, 5-1, 29 Ks, 14 BB, 53 H/.268 opp. avg. in 53.1 IP) and his classmate, 7-foot-1 RHP **Ryan Doherty** (1.93, 2-0, 40 Ks, 7 BB, 18 H/.209 opp. avg. in 23.1 IP), have combined for the following numbers in their rookie season: a 1.87 ERA, 7-1 record, a .250 opponent batting avg., 69 Ks, 21 BB and 71 H in 77.0 IP ... Doherty is averaging 15.4 strikeouts per nine innings pitched (40 Ks in 23.1 IP) and has been fairly dominant since a rough debut in the opener vs. Dayton, when first-game jitters and a tight strike zone contributed to five runs allowed by the rookie on four hits and two walks while recording just two outs (no Ks) ... since that rough debut, Doherty has not allowed an earned run (five unearned) in 13 outings and 22.2 innings, with a .173 opponent batting average (14-for-81) and an 8-to-1 K-to-walk ratio (40/5) during that stretch ... his overall ERA continues to drop (1.93, compared to 67.50 after the Dayton game), with the best opponent batting average on the staff (.209) and just seven total walks, one wild pitch and two hit batters ... Doherty also leads the staff in low opponent 2-out batting (.185).

**SAMPLER PLATTER** – Senior **Kris Billmaier** (Woodinville, Wash.) was a prep shortstop before making the switch to the outfield late in his freshman season at Notre Dame (he was the starting LF and an all-tournament pick during ND's epic showing at the 2000 NCAA Starkville Regional) ... Billmaier then started in left as a sophomore before flipping with classmate Brian Stavisky (the RF in '00-'01) during the 2002 CWS season ... the team tri-captain remained in right for the first half of the 2003 season before becoming the team's fifth CF of the season, where he has logged 27 starts ... he now holds the unique distinction of starting at all three OF positions for large chunks of his college career: 89 starts in RF, 62 in LF and 27 in CF (plus 12 at 2B and six at DH).

**APRIL SHOWERS OF WINS** – ND has dominated in April in the nine-year Paul Maineiri era (**177-39**, .819), including **57-7** (.891) in April the past three seasons (20-2 in '01, 19-2 in '02, 18-3 in '03) ... ND's only April losses in that stretch: vs. Ball State (3-4) and Valparaiso (3-7) in '01, vs. St. John's (3-4) and Pittsburgh (5-7) in '02, and vs. Eastern Michigan, Pittsburgh and BSU in '03 ... top hitters in April of 2003 included freshman DH **Matt Bransfield** (.429), freshman OF **Craig Cooper** (.389), junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** (.380) and sophomore SS **Matt Macri** (.377).

**MONTH-BY-MONTH** – Notre Dame's most consistent hitters by month have included junior C **Javi Sanchez** (.305 in Feb./March, .286 in April, .293 in May, for a total span of just 19 hitting pts) and freshman DH **Steve Andres** (.242-.276-.258, span of 34 hitting pts) ... here's a look at the 12 regulars' hitting month-by-month:

\* Two ND players steadily have posted a better batting average this season during April and again in May:

	Feb./March	April	May
Matt Edwards .....	.341	.367	.453
Joe Thaman .....	.182	.294	.394

\* Four Irish players will be looking to boost their May batting, after seeing their average drop in April and then again this month:

	Feb./March	April	May
Steve Sollmann .....	.396	.380	.324
Cody Rizzo .....	.350	.315	.273
Kris Billmaier .....	.330	.247	.176
Greg Lopez.....	.279	.270	.167

\* Two ND players saw their batting dip in April before an upswing in May:

	Feb./March	April	May
Brennan Grogan.....	.300	.299	.361
Javi Sanchez .....	.305	.286	.293

\* Four others boosted their batting in April but have seen it drop back in May:

	Feb./March	April	May
Steve Andres.....	.242	.276	.258
Matt Macri.....	.256	.377	.235
Matt Bransfield .....	.182	.429	.231
Craig Cooper.....	.273	.389	.214

**CALIFORNIA NATIVES** – Notre Dame's 805 all-time baseball letterwinners hail from 43 states, Ontario and the Canal Zone (now Panama), including 30 from the state of California ... those former ND players include 18 southern California natives, among them Huntington Beach native and former 1B/OF **Jim Gillis** (Union HS; '49-'51), who has been an active member of the ND Alumni Clubs in southern California (including organization of events surrounding the ND-USC football game) ... other former ND players from southern California have included All-America catcher **Walt Osgood** (Compton/St. Anthony's HS; '60-'62), LHP **Ed Lupton** (Ventura; '63-'65, 3.06 career ERA in 161.2 IP), C **Ed Lund** (Pasadena/St. Francis HS; '88-'90, captain of '90 team) and 2B **Greg Layson** (La Mesa/Grossmont HS; '91-'94, .321 career batter in 700 ABs) ... two products of Santa Margarita HS – RHP **Mike Balicki** ('95-'97) and OF/1B **Matt Strickroth** ('99-'02) – have played for ND during the nine-year Paul Mainieri era ... Lund is one of five former catchers among the group, the others: C/OF **Terry Harsha** (Van Nuys, '65), **Michael Dorning** (Claremont/LaVerne Damien HS; '83-'85), **Dennis Twombly** (San Diego/Henry HS; '94) and **Mike Knecht** (Newport Beach/Corona del Mar HS; '98) ... others include: IF/CF **Steve Skupien** (Mission Viejo/Capistrano Valley HS; '86-'88), RHPs **Mike Riddell** (San Bernadino/Aquinas HS; '70-'73) and **Stephen Powell** (Bakersfield; '84-'86), OF **Howard Wood** (Redondo Beach/Montgomery HS; '72-'73) and IFs **Harold Lavelle** (Compton; '55-'56), **Thomas MacDonald** (Downey; '63) and **Robin Reschan** (San Clemente; '70-'72) ... Knecht was among a group of members from the ND Alumni Club of Orange County who were in attendance at Thursday's practice session (Strickroth also will be in attendance this weekend, among others).

**THE NORTHERNERS** – The ND baseball program's 12 all-time letterwinners from Northern California include OF **Arthur Campbell** (San Francisco), who played on the third varsity team in 1895 ... other San Francisco natives to play for the ND baseball program have included brothers OF **Roy** ('39, OF) and SS **Ray Pinelli** ('39-'41, SS), 1B/OF **Tim Reardon** (St. Ignatius HS; '63) and OF **Bert Dunne** ('24-'25) ... the Bay-area natives also include three from Oakland: **William Yore** ('27), **Robert Machado** ('48-'49) and **Kevin Hardy** ('65, '67), a rare three-sport letterwinner at ND who was a starting DL on ND's 1966 national championship football team ... the program's other letterwinners from Northern California have included pitcher **Bernard Abrott** (Berkeley; '27), OFs **Leonard Scarpelli** (San Jose; '44) and **John Musto** (Stockton; '65-'66) and IF **Steve Verduzco** (Scotts Valley/Bellermine Prep; '92-'93).

**FLIPPING THE SWITCH** – Several Notre Dame players – including four starters – have made significant position switches during their ND careers, with three doing so in the past few months:

\* Junior **Javi Sanchez** was a prep 2B/3B at Miami's Columbus HS (also the alma mater of ND's Paul Mainieri) but was pressed into becoming the starting SS last season, after injuries to then-freshmen Matt Macri and Matt Edwards ... Sanchez has tackled yet another new position in 2003, as the starter behind the plate (where he has caught 85% of the innings).

\* Freshman **Matt Edwards** (Mechanicsville, Va.) was a standout SS/3B at Lee-Davis HS and was starting at SS for the Irish last season before a tragic season-ending broken leg ... Edwards has returned this season with some limit to his mobility and range, splitting time at both corners of the infield as he has learned the new position of 1B.

\* Senior **Kris Billmaier** was predominantly a prep infielder at Woodinville (Wash.) HS before starting at left and right field during his first three seasons with the Irish ... he then emerged as the fifth (and final) option to fill the vacancy in CF created by the graduation of 2002 national player-of-the-year finalist Steve Stanley (Billmaier's only previous time in CF came during his sophomore season at WHS).

\* Junior **Steve Sollmann** has developed into a stellar defensive 2B, after making the rare switch from CF (where he starred at Cincinnati's St. Xavier HS) ... Mainieri has a history of signing a handful of prep SS and converting them to other positions but Sollmann's move in from the OF to the middle IF was more unique (former major leaguers who have pulled off such a switch include Bill Russell of the Dodgers and Chad Myers of the Cubs).

**Inside The Notre Dame Bullpen (stats for relief appearances only)**

Pitcher	ERA	W-L	Rel.	GP	SV	IP	H (Avg., HR)	R/ER	K/BB	WP	HBP	Inh.	R's Sc.	1st Bat's
Arminio	0.00	0-0	2	0	2.1	0 (.000, 0)	0/0	1/1	0	0	0	0-of-2	0-for-1	
Thornton	1.59	0-0	6	0	11.1	9 (.243, 0)	3/2	5/6	0	2	1-of-4	2-4, BB, HB, K		
Viloria	1.64	1-0	19	2	22.0	17 (.218, 0)	3/2	17/4	0	0	2-of-10	3-15, 2 BB, 4 K		
Doherty	2.33	1-0	13	0	19.1	16 (.225, 0)	8/5	33/6	1	2	1-of-3 (SF)	2-11, BB, 6 K		
Gagne	2.79	3-5	27	12	51.2	46 (.237, 2)	26/16	36/20	3	0	3-of-11	5-23, 3 BB, 2 K		
Ogilvie	4.50	0-0	1	0	2.0	2 (.250, 0)	1/1	2/0	0	0	0	0-for-1		
Jones	5.84	2-0	11	0	13.2	17 (.293, 0)	11/8	13/2	1	2	3-of-6	1-for-10, K		
Vergara	5.49	0-0	9	1	19.2	21 (.266, 2)	15/12	14/14	2	4	0	1-for-8, 3 K		
Laird	5.55	1-1	18	1	18.0	30 (.233, 5)	25/22	35/16	5	2	4-of-4	3-15, 2 BB, 8 K		
Kalita	8.10	0-0	1	0	3.1	6 (.545, 0)	3/3	0/3	0	1	0	BB		
Wilkins	9.00	0-0	3	0	4.0	10 (.500, 1)	6/4	5/1	0	0	0	1-for-3, K		
Axford	0.00	0-0	1	0	2.1	4 (.364, 0)	5/4	3/7	1	0	1-1	1-for-1		
Bickford	18.00	0-0	1	0	2.0	4 (.364, 0)	4/4	2/3	1	0	0	0-for-1, K		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>8-6</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>179.2</b>	<b>169 (.251, 10)</b>	<b>99/75</b>	<b>155/73</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15-of-41</b>	<b>19-93 (.204)</b>		
												<b>(37%)</b>	<b>9 BB, 27 K</b>	

**PUTTING OUT FIRES** – Several ND relievers have slammed the door when inheriting runners on base ... most notably, senior set-up man **Brandon Viloria** has allowed just 2-of-10 inherited baserunners to score while senior closer **J.P. Gagne** has let just 3-of-11 inherited runners score ... freshman LHP Tom Thornton has allowed just 1-of-4 inherited runners to score but the rest of the staff has let in 9-of-16 ... freshman RHP **Ryan Doherty** has allowed just 2-of-11 batting in the first hitters he has faced out of the bullpen this season, with 6 Ks in those situations ... first batters are 3-for-15 vs. Viloria and 5-for-23 (.217) vs. Gagne when coming out of the 'pen.

**BULLPEN BOUNCES BACK** – The ND relievers had some rocky outings in the first weeks of '03 but have lowered the overall bullpen ERA to 4.04 (plus .251 opponent batting, 2.1 K-to-walk ratio), with some strong performances in the second half of the season.

**THE FIREMAN** – Senior setup man **Brandon Viloria** owns the ND record for lowest career walk average (1.63 BB per 9 IP), just below the standing record of 1.64 set by Alan Walania from 1990-93 ... Viloria also owns the 5th-best career ERA in the ND record book (2.61), among pitchers with 60-plus IP ... Viloria owns a staff-best 1.64 ERA with a 1.64 walk avg. (2nd behind Chris Niesel's 1.49), 4.2 K-to-walk ratio (4th-best) and a .218 opponent batting avg. (2nd-best) ... teams are batting just .152 vs. Viloria with runners on base and .185 with 2 outs (both tops on the staff) while he has yet to allow a home run in 22 IP ... he also leads the team in "WHIP" (9.6 walks and hits allowed per 9 IP) and is averaging a team-best 34.2 batters faced per 9 IP.

**CLOSING WITH THE CLOSER** – Current senior closer **J.P. Gagne** had some rocky moments early in the 2002 postseason but managed to post an amazing ratio of strikeouts (15) to walks (1) in 18 innings of '02 postseason action ... his best two outings came at key times, retiring nine straight to close the 10-4 opening win at Florida State before coming on to strike out the side in the 9th inning of the 3-1 clincher in that three-game NCAA Super-Regional series ... he also went 7-2 in his final nine decisions of the 2002 season.

**ROAD DOGS** – Notre Dame has hit 18 points higher at home this season (.317) than on the road (.299, including neutral-site games) ... the top Irish hitters outside of Eck Stadium have included junior 3B/1B **Matt Edwards** (.371), junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** (.331), junior C **Javi Sanchez** and freshman RF **Cody Rizzo** (both .330), and freshman LF **Craig Cooper** (.325) ... six ND players are hitting higher on the road than at home: **Cooper** (.259 at home, 66 pts higher on the road), **Sanchez** (.250 home, 80 pts higher on road), senior CF **Kris Billmaier** (.276 road, .247 home), **Rizzo** (.300 home, 30 pts higher on road), freshman DH **Steve Andres** (.256 road, .205 home) ... Sanchez also hit 31 points higher on the road during the 2002 season (.294, compared to .263 at home) ... three Irish players have hit 100-plus points higher in the confines of Eck Stadium during the 2003 season: sophomore SS **Matt Macri** (.429 home, .193 road; 236 pts higher at the Eck) and junior 1B **Joe Thaman** (.350 home, .247 road) ... freshman DH **Matt Bransfield** has hit an identical .308 in home and road games while Edwards' batting average has been steady regardless of locale (.389 home, .371 road) and freshman LF **Brennan Grogan** has near-identical numbers (.313 road, .311 home).

**STRONG UP THE MIDDLE** – ND boasts the only pair of middle infielders who each received '03 preseason All-America honors, with junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** earning a 2nd-team nod from the National College Baseball Writers 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* 3rd 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 (it was shared by Virginia Tech 2B Marc Tugwell and West Virginia 1B Jarrod Rine) ... 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 SS Aaron Hill (LSU)... two other SS – Richmond's David Reaver and USC's Anthony Lunetta – 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 '04 draft (*BA/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 BE player of year (BE coaches and *BA*), #124 college prospect for '03 draft (*BA/PG*, 12/15/02), preseason all-BE (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*)

## NOTRE DAME BASEBALL – By The Numbers

- 22,737 ..... Notre Dame's combined travel mileage in 11 roadtrips during 2003 season
- 3,238 ..... Notre Dame's all-time varsity baseball games (pre-NCAAs)
- 729 ..... Paul Mainieri's career coaching wins in 21 overall seasons
- 515 ..... Total pitches in the 19-inning ND-Rutgers game
- .471 ..... Kris Billmaier's career NCAA Tournament batting average (33-for-70; with .289 overall career batting avg.)
- 440 ..... Innings caught by Javi Sanchez in 2003 (of 518, or 85%)
- 397 ..... Paul Mainieri's career wins in nine seasons at Notre Dame
- .365 ..... Steve Sollmann's career batting avg. (8th in ND history)
- .361 ..... ND's team batting avg. at '03 BE Tournament (.230 at previous seven)
- 280 ..... All-time Notre Dame baseball opponent
- 245 ..... Steve Sollmann's career hits (3rd-most ever by an ND junior)
- 213 ..... Kris Billmaier's career game played with the Irish
- 142-47 ..... ND's combined record during the past three seasons (nearly +100)
- 110 ..... Combined games missed in 2002 by Matt Edwards (59, broken leg) and Matt Macri (51, elbow surgery)
- 92 ..... J.P. Gagne's career appearances (tying ND record, Chris Michalak)
- 91 ..... Combined error-free games by middle-IFs Sollmann and Macri in '03
- 80 ..... ND baseball seasons with a winning record (of 111)
- 43 ..... Home states represented among ND baseball all-time letterwinners
- 30 ..... ND baseball all-time letterwinners from California
- 26 ..... Cody Rizzo's times hit-by-pitch in 2003 (11th in NCAA history)
- 25.0 ..... J.P. Gagne's recent streak of IP without allowing an earned run
- 22.2 ..... Ryan Doherty's current streak of IP without allowing an earned run
- 21 ..... Irish "Big wins" in 2003 (by 5-plus runs)
- 19 ..... Home states represented on ND's 2003 roster
- 17 ..... Winning streak posted by Irish in 2003 (2nd in ND history)
- 16 ..... ND baseball players who posted 3.0-plus GPA in '03 spring semester
- 15 ..... ND's streak of consecutive 40-win seasons (3rd-longest active)
- 13' 9" ..... Combined height of fr. pitchers Doherty (7-1) and Thornton (6-7)
- 12-5 ..... Combined postseason record by the Irish in 2002 and '03
- 9-1 ..... ND's 2003 record in 1-run games during '03 season
- 9 ..... ND's total BIG EAST Conference sports titles (BE record) in 2002-03 (in 22 sports)
- 8 ..... ND's BIG EAST Tournament appearances (in 8 seasons)
- 6-2 ..... Won-loss record by the Irish in last eight BET games (12-12 in first 24)
- 6 ..... ND's NCAA appearances in 9-year Mainieri era
- 5 ..... Position starters lost to graduation and draft from the '02 CWS team
- 5 ..... Irish players who have started in CF this season (just 1 from '99-'02)
- 4 ..... Consecutive years for ND with two Academic All-Americans
- 3.51 ..... Current team ERA
- 3 ..... Teams in national ERA top-20 each of last 4 yrs (ND, Texas, Rice)
- 2 ..... Teams that have won back-to-back BIG EAST titles (SJU, '85-'86; ND '02-'03)