



**2002 NCAA Division I Baseball Championships
Notre Dame Regional
May 31-June 2, 2002
Frank Eck Stadium**

PRE-TOURNAMENT QUOTES

South Alabama Head Coach Steve Kittrell

On being at Notre Dame...

“We are very excited to be here. We have never been to Notre Dame before so it is very exciting for our players to be here. We took the football tour earlier today and we realized there is a lot of tradition at Notre Dame. That tradition also includes the baseball team. Coach [Paul] Mainieri has done a great job building up the Notre Dame program.”

On his expectations for the weekend...

“This weekend should be very competitive. The selection committee did a great job of pairing the four teams in this regional where there is no distinct difference between the number one and number four seeds. In this regional, the number one seed means nothing. I think I would actually rather be a host, number two seed than a number one seed on the road.”

Notre Dame Head Coach Paul Mainieri

On the opportunity to host the regional...

“Once again we’ve had the opportunity to host the regional for the third time in four years. That’s something that we’re very proud of from a personal standpoint and a university standpoint and also from the standpoint of a university from the northern part of the United States; we’re very proud to have this opportunity.”

On the makeup of the regional field...

“My feelings are very strong that this is a very balanced field. All four teams are very capable of winning this tournament. We are very excited about the opportunity to compete against these schools. It’s always nice to have the opportunity to play teams that you don’t play frequently and this is the case here.”

On his team ...

“I feel very good about our club. Winning the BIG EAST conference title last weekend was a tremendous thrill for our team because we had never done that before. We are just hoping to continue to play good baseball this weekend.”

Ohio State Head Coach Bob Todd

On the competition in the regional ...

“There are some talented baseball players in this regional. Kent State has won 21 of their last 29 games. The University of South Alabama has won 21 of their last 27. Notre Dame may be the hottest team in the country, as it has won 35 of its last 40 games after getting off to a slow start. I am a member of the

selection committee and when we looked around to see which regionals might be competitive and which might be relatively easy for the host teams, this was one that we looked at and said, ‘This is going to be interesting.’ The folks of South Bend are going to see some exciting baseball and I think it is going to be a good weekend.”

On his team’s season ...

“This has been an up and down year. I don’t know which ballclub is going to show up. We played very well and won a tournament at the start of the year in Starkville, Miss. We went through the whole season without losing a conference weekend; we either won or tied each time. We were two-hundredths of a percentage point from winning the regular-season Big Ten Championship. But we did play well last weekend and we won the Big Ten Tournament Championship. I just hope we are going to keep the momentum.”

On the decision for No. 1 seed South Alabama not to host a regional ...

“A great deal of information is used when teams are put on the board as possible host sites and they were definitely one of those under consideration. I cannot speak for the whole committee, but I know they were considered very heavily (to be a host site). There are a lot of factors that the committee took into consideration and I know one of those was that the committee was given an edict by the Championship Competition Cabinet that we had to cut out flights due to 9/11. We needed to continue to look at regionalizing the tournament and seeing how many bus trips we can create.”

Kent State Head Coach Rick Rembielak

On the regional field...

“First I would like to offer my congratulations to Notre Dame, Ohio State and South Alabama – storied programs without a doubt whose reputations proceed them. There are some history behind these programs.”

“We played South Alabama in 1993 in a regional. They had a fabulous ball club back then and have been competitive ever since. Paul’s [Mainieri] ball club at Notre Dame is one that has been up there since day one when he took over the program. We are very familiar with Ohio State. Without question, this is going to be a very competitive regional.

On playing close to home...

“We are pleased to be geographically located somewhat close to home. I think the NCAA has done a great job of helping out the midwest and northeast teams — keeping them closer to home.

On playing at Notre Dame...

“It is nice to be here. This is the first time I’ve been on this campus. I’ve never been up here but I know a lot about it, and I know a lot about the program. Our guys are very excited to be here.”

On the Kent State starting pitcher vs. South Alabama...

“Dirk Hayhurst has been our best pitcher all year. I don’t know if we need to deviate from that. Game one is going to be very important, and we don’t have too many lefthanders to throw. We got to with our best guy.”