

NOTRE DAME FENCING – NCAA DAY TWO NOTES

Thursday, March 17, 2005 ... Houston, Texas (JW Marriott)

Notre Dame's quest to win its second straight NCAA combined fencing championship (and third in the past four years) continues today at the JW Marriott, in Houston, Texas. After one day of bouts, Penn State leads with 59 points, followed by Columbia (52), Notre Dame (50), St. John's (48) and Harvard (47). The NCAAs again will adhere to the four-day format, with the women's bouts slated for Thursday and Friday (March 16-17) while the men will fence on the weekend.

Each of the five teams listed above has the maximum six entrants in the women's competition but only three (ND, PSU and Harvard) also will have six men competing at the '06 NCAAs.

Sophomore Mariel Zagunis (11-3) currently stands 3rd in the sabre standings while freshmen Adi Nott (foil) and Madeline Stephan (epee) both are 7th in their weapons after 9-5 records on day-1. Junior sabreist Valerie Providenza is on pace for her third All-America finish (10th; 8-6) while sophomore foilist Melanie Bautista (13th; 7-7) and junior epeeist Amy Orlando (16th; 6-8) round out the Notre Dame contingent.

Notre Dame joined longtime rival Penn State and emerging power Harvard as the only teams that qualified the maximum 12 fencers (two per weapon) for the 2006 NCAAs while Columbia and St. John's each qualified 11 (Ohio State, the 2004 champion and '05 runner-up, qualified nine) ... recent history has shown that an 11-fencer squad can contend for the NCAA title, including the '03 NCAAs that saw Notre Dame's 12-fencer squad edge an 11-fencer Penn State unit by just three total bouts (182-179) while ND's 2005 team became the first ever to win the NCAA title without the full allotment of competitors (the 11-fencer Irish squad rallied to beat OSU, 173-171, followed by SJU, PSU, Columbia and Harvard) ... SJU was the only team at the '05 NCAAs with 12 fencers ... ND was runner-up to PSU every year from 1996-2000 before finishing third in '01 and '02 (plus '04), with the '03 championship representing ND's first national title since 1994 ... Ohio State also qualified 12 fencers in 2003 but finished fourth, behind ND, PSU and St. John's (which had just 10 fencers at the '03 NCAAs) ... the '04 NCAAs saw Ohio State win the title, followed by PSU and ND ... the 2001-04 NCAAs featured four different champions (SJU in '01, PSU in '02, ND in '03, OSU in '04).

The Notre Dame women own a combined record of 61-33 vs. their Friday opponents (in recent college bouts and NCAA meetings). It will be a huge day for the ND epeeists, who face fencers from top contenders Penn State, Columbia and St. John's. The ND foilists also will battle with Columbia (plus bouts with Princeton's Jacqueline Leahy, currently in 3rd place) while the Irish sabreists have big showdowns with Penn State and Ohio State (the ND and OSU women's sabre entrants already have met 26 times previously in college competition).

The 144-fencer field includes 24 men's and 24 women's fencers at each of three weapons (foil, epee, sabre) ... fencers will compete against the other 23 competitors in their respective weapons, with teams earning one point for each round-robin victory posted by a fencer from that team ... the top four round-robin finishers in each weapon then will fence for the respective individual titles at the end of Friday (women) and Sunday's (men's) round-robin competition (those results do not factor into the team scores) ... the top 12 finishers in each weapon receive All-America honors.

Some notes on the Friday matchups follow below ... check back to und.com throughout the NCAAs for complete coverage of ND's quest for its eighth NCAA team title, including a look at the ND program's history of fencers from Texas and a list of fencing alums currently living in the lone star state (many of whom will be in attendance at the '06 NCAAs).

SPORTS HOTLINE UPDATES – The Notre Dame sports hotline will provide regular on-site updates from all four days of the NCAAs, with the hotline to be updated several times each day (typically at the top of each hour, after bouts begins) ... to access the hotline, call (574) 631-3000, then select option "8" (for tennis and fencing) followed by option "3" for fencing updates.

THE SCHEDULE (at the JW Marriott in Houston)

Friday, March 17

9:00 a.m. – women's foil and women's epee (rounds 5-7)

12:15 p.m. – tournament ceremony

12:45 p.m. – women's foil and women's epee semifinals, final and third-place bout; women's sabre (rounds 5-7)

3:30 p.m. – women's sabre semifinals, final and third-place bout, followed by awards presentation (4:30)

Saturday, March 18

10 a.m. – men's foil and men's epee (round 1)

11:30 a.m. – men's foil and men's epee (rounds 2-4)

3:00 p.m. – men's sabre (round 1)

4:00 p.m. – men's sabre (rounds 2-4)

Sunday, March 19

9:00 a.m. – men's foil and men's epee (rounds 5-7)

Noon – men's sabre (rounds 5-7); men's foil and men's epee semifinals, final and third-place bout

2:45 p.m. – men's sabre semifinals, final and third-place bout

3:30 p.m. – men's individual and team awards presentations

Note that space limitations have resulted in the three weapons not being contested at the same time, as the epee and foil will take place in the late morning and early afternoon while the sabre bouts will be in the late afternoon.

WOMEN'S EPEE (jr. Amy Orlando and fr. Madeleine Stephan, paired with Northwestern's Sharon Sullivan)

Round 5 – vs. Columbia's Morgan Midgley and Rachel Rowe and Brown's Ruth Schneider

Round 6 – vs. Penn State's Case Szarwark and Katarzyna Trzopek and Princeton's Erin McGarry

Round 7 – vs. Joanna Guy and Reka Szele of St. John's and NYU's Jean Goto

Highlight Bouts – the Irish will battle fencers from fellow contending teams (Columbia, PSU and SJU) in each round ... Columbia's Midgley placed 3rd at the '05 NAAs ... PSU's Trzopek won the '03 NCAA title and was 6th in '04 but missed the '05 NAAs due to injury ... her teammate Szarwark currently is 3rd in the epee standings (she placed 18th at the '04 NAAs and 9th in '05) ... the SJU tandem of Guy (10th) and Szele (13th) both had solid finishes at the '05 NAAs.

Recent Series Head-to-Head Notes for Orlando and Stephan vs. Friday's Epee Opponents (10-16):

Columbia (0-6) – Midgley has won three recent bouts vs. Orlando, including a 2-3 decision at the '05 NAAs (also 1-3 at the '05 NYU Duals and 3-5 at the '06 NYU Duals, beating Stephan by the same score) ... Rowe beat Orlando at the NYU Duals in '05 (3-4) and '06 (2-5).

Penn State (2-5) – Orlando has split four recent college bouts vs. Szarwark, including a key 5-3 win at the '05 NAAs that helped ND surge to the team title (also 5-1 win at '04 NAAs, with 3-4 loss at PSU Duals in fall of '03 and 0-5 loss at '05 ND Duals) ... Orlando was edged by Trzopek at the '05 ND Duals (3-4) and again at the NAAs (4-5), also losing a 1-5 bout at the PSU Duals in the fall of '03.

St. John's (4-2) – Orlando beat both SJU fencers at the '05 NAAs (3-2 vs. Szele, 5- vs. Guy) and repeated those wins at the '06 NYU Duals (5-3 in both bouts) ... Stephan lost 4-5 to Guy and 3-5 to Szele at NYU.

Princeton (1-1) – Orlando beat McGarry at the '04 NAAs (5-1) but lost to her in '05 (2-3).

Brown (0-1) – Schneider beat Orlando at the '04 NAAs (3-5).

NYU (3-1) – Orlando split vs. Goto at the NYU Duals in '04 (5-3) and '05 (4-5), adding a 5-4 win at the '05 NAAs ... Stephan edged Goto at the '06 NYU Duals (5-4).

Note: Stephan has yet to face Schneider, Szarwark, Trzopek or McGarry in college bouts with ND.

WOMEN'S FOIL (sophomore Melanie Bautista and freshman Adi Nott, paired with UCSDs Jen Chun)

Round 5 – vs. Columbia's Kelsey Finkel and Kathleen Reckling and Christine Lee of Tufts

Round 6 – vs. Princeton's Jacqueline Leahy and Sara Jew-Lim and Penn's Ilana Sinkin

Round 7 – vs. Temple's Nina Gernes and Jenna Remmert and NYU's Kristen Wentrcek

Highlight Bouts: the day's biggest matchups will come early, versus a Columbia pair that has limited NCAA experience (Reckling was 22nd at the '04 NAAs but did not qualify in '05) ... Princeton's Leahy is one of the top fencers in the field, currently ranking 3rd in the foil standings (the three-time All-American placed 4th at the '04 NAAs and 3rd in '05).

Bautista and Nott's Recent Head-to-Head Series vs. Friday's Foil Opponents (3-3):

Columbia (1-3) – Finkel posted wins over Nott (1-5) and Bautista (3-4) at the '06 NYU Duals while Reckling lost to Nott (5-4) and beat Bautista (2-5).

NYU (2-0) – Nott (5-0) and Bautista (5-3) both posted wins over Wentrcek at the '06 NYU Duals.

Note: Bautista and Nott have not fenced college bouts with ND vs. most of Friday's foes (Lee, Leahy, Jew-Lim, Sinkin, Gernes and Remmert).

WOMEN'S SABRE (jr. Valerie Providenza and soph. Mariel Zagunis, paired with UCSD's Raelyn Jacobson)

Round 5 – vs. Ohio State's Siobhan Byrne and Eileen Grench and Stanford's Eva Jellison

Round 6 – vs. Penn State's Caitlin Thompson and Sophia Hiss and North Carolina's Jennifer Kling

Round 7 – vs. Northwestern's Mai Van Vu and Emily Pasternak of Northwestern and Wayne State's Katarzyna Kuzniak

Highlights Bouts: The Irish face a tall order in the first round of the day before a showdown with PSU and three regional rivals to close the day ... OSU's Byrne placed 3rd at the '05 NAAs while Hiss was the '04 runner-up and finished 5th in '05 ... Vu and Pasternak both have past NCAA experience.

Series Head-to-Head Notes for Providenza and Zagunis vs. Friday's Sabre Opponents (48-14):

Penn State (4-2) – Providenza's 3-1 mark vs. Hiss includes the 2004 NCAA title bout (15-8), plus an NCAA round-robin win in '05 (5-1) and a 5-3 win at the '05 ND Duals (she lost a 1-5 bout in the '04 NAAs) ... Zagunis suffered one of her two round-robin losses at the '05 NAAs vs. Hiss (3-5), earlier beating Hiss (5-2) at the '05 ND Duals.

Ohio State (17-9) – Zagunis has won all eight of her college bouts vs. Byrne, including a 5-0 win in the '05 NCAA round-robin followed by a 15-5 bout in the semifinals (also 5-0 in the '06 Regional pools and 15-4 in the Regional final; earlier 5-3 in the '06 ND Duals, 5-0 in the '05 MFC team bouts, 5-3 at the '05 ND Duals and 5-3 at the '05 NYU Duals) ... Zagunis has defeated Grench in four recent bouts (5-3 at the '06 NYU Duals and the '05 MFC team bouts, also 5-1 at the '05 NYU Duals and 5-2 at the '05 ND Duals) ... Providenza's rivalry with Byrne includes a 2-5 record, with wins at the '05 ND Duals (5-3) and the '05 Regional pools (5-2), plus losses at the '05 NYU Duals (2-5), the '05 MFC team bouts (4-5), the '05 NAAs (0-5 round-robin, 11-15 in 3rd-place bout) and the '06 ND Duals (3-5) ... Providenza's 3-4 record vs. Grench includes a 3-5 loss in the '06 Regional pools before decisively winning the rematch in the Regional quarterfinals (15-3) ... she also beat Grench in the '05 MFC team bouts (5-2) and at the '05 Regional (5-4), with losses at the '05 NYU Duals (4-5), the '05 ND Duals (2-5) and the '06 ND Duals (1-5).

Stanford (2-2) – Zagunis beat Jellison at the '06 NYU Duals (5-1) but suffered a rare loss vs. her at the UCSD Duals (1-5) ... Providenza lost to Jellison at NYU (2-5) but won at UCSD (5-3).

Northwestern (19-1) – Providenza holds a 9-1 record vs. Vu, including a 5-1 win in the '05 NAAs (also 5-2 at '06 Regional, 15-2 in '05 MFC final, 5-4 at '05 Regional, 5-3 at '04 Regional, 5-1 at '04 Northwestern Duals, 5-1 at Northwestern Duals in fall of '05 and 5-2 at '06 ND Duals) ... Vu's only win vs. Providenza came at the '05 ND Duals (4-5) ... Zagunis has won four recent bouts vs. Vu: 5-3 at the '05 NAAs, 5-0 at the '05 ND Duals, 5-1 at the Northwestern Duals (fall '05) and 5-1 at the '06 ND Duals ... Zagunis beat Pasternak at the Northwestern Duals in the fall of '05 (5-0) and at the '06 ND Duals (5-1), adding two wins at the '06 Regional (5-0 in pools, 15-5 in quarterfinal) ... Pasternak also lost to Providenza earlier this season (5-1 at home meet, 5-2 at ND Duals).

Wayne State (3-0) – Providenza beat Kuzniak at the '06 ND Duals (5-0) and then in the Regional 3rd-place bout (15-2) while Zagunis topped Kuzniak 5-1 at the ND Duals.

North Carolina (3-0) – Zagunis (5-3) and Providenza (5-2) both beat Kling at the '06 NYU Duals, with Providenza earlier beating Kling at the '05 Duke Duals (5-2).

Note: Providenza and Zagunis have not fenced Thompson in an official college team bout but they all train at the same Portland-based Oregon Fencing Alliance and have faced each other at many national and international tournaments.