

NOTRE DAME FENCING – NCAA DAY TWO NOTES

Friday, March 18, 2005 ... Houston, Texas (George Brown Convention Center)

Notre Dame's quest to reclaim the NCAA combined fencing championship continues today at Houston's George Brown Convention Center, with the final nine round-robin bouts for each of the 69 men's entrants (23 per weapon) while the women will fence on the weekend (March 19-20).

Thursday's opening-round action saw three Notre Dame men's fencers positioned themselves for a run at their respective NCAA weapons titles while the Irish remained part of a four-team battle for the men's and women's combined title. Senior Michal Sobieraj (12-2 record) stands in 2nd place among the 24-fencer men's epee field while sophomore Patrick Ghattas is tied for 3rd in the sabre competition with a 11-3 record. Freshman Jakub Jedrkowiak is tied for 6th in the foil bouting at 9-5. The top four finishers in each weapon will advance to Friday's semifinals in each respective weapon, with a chance to win the individual NCAA title (the semifinal, third-place and final bouts do not factor into the team scoring, which is based only on the round-robin win totals).

Two sophomores – sabre Matt Stearns (11th; 8-5) and epeeist Aaron Adjemian (3-11) – round out Notre Dame's contingent in the NCAA men's competition.

Ohio State (57) and St. John's (50) – the only teams to qualify the maximum six men's fencers – lead the competition after the day-one bouts, followed by longtime rivals Penn State (47) and Notre Dame (43). The Nittany Lions and Irish qualified just five men's fencers but each will send six women to the strips this weekend while Ohio State has only five women entrants and the St. John's women are ranked just 10th in the national poll (the Irish women are ranked No. 1).

Notre Dame split 14 bouts on Thursday vs. fencers from St. John's (5-5), Penn State (1-1) and Ohio State (1-1). The Irish totaled 19 wins in sabre (OSU had 222, PSU 19, SJU 16), 15 in epee (SJU had 19, OSU 16 and PSU 7) and 9 in foil (PSU had 21, OSU 19 and SJU 15).

Perennial contender St. John's qualified the maximum 12 fencers (two per weapon) for the 2005 NCAAs while Notre Dame, Penn State and Ohio State each qualified 11 ... the Irish have five men competing today, two in epee and sabre and one in foil, with sophomore Frank Bontempo an alternate for the men's foil field ... 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) ... Notre Dame was runner-up to Penn State 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 previous four NCAAs have featured four different champions (SJU in '01, PSU in '02, ND in '03, OSU in '04).

The Notre Dame men own a combined record of 57-55 vs. their Friday opponents (33-29 in epee, 21-24 in sabre, 4-2 in sabre), with key 2-day bouts including: ND vs. PSU in foil, ND vs. OSU, Wayne State and Princeton in epee, and ND vs. OSU and PSU in sabre.

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 (men) and Sunday's (women's) round-robin competition (those results do not factor into the team scores) ... the top 12 finishers in each weapon receive All-America honors.

Check back to und.com throughout the NCAAs for complete coverage of ND's quest for its seventh NCAA 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 '05 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 ... to access the hotline, call (574) 631-3000, then select option "8" (for tennis and fencing) followed by option "3" for fencing updates.

THE REMAINING SCHEDULE (at George Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston)

Friday, March 18

9:30 a.m. – Men's Weapons, Rounds 5-7 (end of men's team competition)

2:00 p.m. – Men's Individual Weapon Semifinals, followed by Finals

Saturday, March 19

Noon – Women's Weapons, Rounds 1-4

Sunday, March 20

9:30 a.m. – Women's Weapons, Rounds 5-7 (end of women's team competition)

4:00 p.m. – Women's Individual Weapon Semifinals, followed by Finals

FRIDAY'S NCAA FENCING SCHEDULE (DAY 2) – The men will fence the final 9 (rounds 5-7) of their 23 round-robin bouts on Friday, beginning at 9:30 a.m. Here's who the Irish will face in second-day action (see head-to-head history later in release):

MEN'S EPEE (sr. Michal Sobieraj and soph. Aaron Adjemian, paired with NYU's Philip Andrews)

Round 5 – vs. Wayne State's Marek Petraszek and Wojciech Dudek and Columbia's William Verigan

Round 6 – vs. Princeton's Soren Thompson and Ben Solomon, and Jason Henderson of Rutgers

Round 7 – vs. Ohio State's Denis Tolkachev and Christian Rivera and Dana Sanford of Drew

Current Standings (after Thursday's 14 bouts): (2) Sobieraj, (22) Adjemian, (1) Petraszak, (14) Dudek, (23) Verigan, (5) Thompson, (8) Solomon, (18) Henderson, (7) Tolkachev, (12) Rivera and (20) Sanford

Highlight Bouts: vs. Wayne State epeeists Marek Petraszek (7th in '04) and Wojciech Dudek (12th in '04, 17th in '02), Columbia's William Verigan (6th in '04, 17th in '03), Princeton's Soren Thompson ('01 champion, '02 runner-up, 12th in '03, '04 Olympian/DNF college bouts) and Ben Solomon (19th in '04 and 5th in '03), Ohio State's Denis Tolkachev (4th in '04) and Christian Rivera (member of current first-place team).

Series Head-to-Head Notes for Sobieraj and Adjemian vs. Friday's Epee Opponents (32-29):

Wayne State (9-13) – Sobieraj is 6-1 in recent bouts vs. Wojciech Dudek, including a 15-11 win in the '05 MFC semifinals ... he holds a 2-5 record vs. Marek Petraszek, with wins coming at the '05 Midwest Regional (5-4) and '04 MFC final (15-9) and losses at '04 ND Duals (3-5), '04 MFC team bouts (4-5), '04 Regional (3-5), '04 NCAA round-robin (4-5) and '05 ND Duals (3-4) ... Adjemian is 0-3 vs. Dudek and holds a 1-4 record vs. Petraszek – his win coming at the '04 Regional (5-3) and losses at the '04 ND Duals (3-5), '04 MFC team bouts (2-5), '05 Regional (3-5) and '04 MFC quarterfinals (4-15).

Columbia (3-2) – Sobieraj is 3-1 vs. William Verigan, including a 1-1 in NCAA round-robin action ... Adjemian lost to Verigan (4-5) at '04 NYU Duals

Princeton (3-1) – Sobieraj is 2-0 against Ben Solomon, with wins in '03 NCAA (5-4) and '04 NCAA round-robin (5-3) ... he is 1-1 vs. Soren Thompson, with a 5-2 win in '03 NCAA round-robin (5-2) and 3-5 loss in '02 NCAAs

Rutgers (0-1) – Sobieraj lost to Jason Henderson in '04 NCAA round-robin (3-5)

Ohio State (16-12) – Sobieraj is 6-4 against Denis Tolkachev with victories coming at the '04 ND Duals (5-3), '04 MFC Team Bouts (5-1), '05 NYU Duals (5-2) and '05 ND Duals, in addition to wins in the '04 NCAA third-place bout (15-8) and the '04 MFC Individual Quarterfinal (15-10); losses at the '04 Midwest Regional (2-5), '04 NCAA Round-robin (1-5), '05 MFC Team Bouts (2-5) and '05 Midwest Regional (3-5) ... Sobieraj holds a 5-1 record vs. Christian Rivera with wins coming at the '04 ND Duals (5-1), '04 Midwest Regional (5-3), '05 ND Duals (5-1), '05 MFC Team Bouts (5-4) and the '05 Midwest Regional (5-3) and his loss at the '05 NYU Duals (3-5) ... Adjemian is 2-5 against Tolkachev with victories coming at the '05 NYU Duals (5-3) and '05 Midwest Regional (5-1) and losses at the '04 ND Duals (1-5), '04 MFC Team Bouts (1-5), '04 Midwest Regional (2-5), '05 ND Duals (3-5) and the '05 MFC Team Bouts (4-5) ... Adjemian has a 3-2 record against Rivera – victories at the '04 ND Duals (5-4), '05 NYU Duals (5-1) and '05 Midwest Regional (5-4) and losses at the '04 Midwest Regional (4-5) and '03 MFC Team Bouts (2-3).

Drew (1-0) – Sobieraj defeated Dana Sanford (5-1) at the 2004 NCAA round-robin.

DAY-ONE NOTES – Sobieraj is on his way to a third straight semifinal appearance (he was the '03 runner-up and 3rd-place finisher in '04) and has all but clinched becoming the second Notre Dame epee fencer ever to be a four-year All-American (he also placed 10th in '02) ... his fellow Polish native Marek Petraszek of Wayne State leads the epee standings (13-1), followed by Sobieraj (12-2) and three fencers tied at 10-4 (including Air Force's Jason Stockdale, Harvard's Julian Rose and a pair of former champions in Princeton's Soren Thompson and SJU's Arpad Horvath) ... Sobieraj's more noteworthy wins on Thursday came vs. Rose (5-3), '04 runner-up Benjamin Bratton of SJU (5-2), Stockdale (5-3) and his AFA teammate Tim French (5-1), and Duke's Nathan Bragg (5-3) ... he lost an early bout to Harvard's Benji Ungar (2-5) and then lost in overtime to his four-year college rival Horvath (3-5) ... Adjemian had a 5-3 win over NCAA veteran Martin Lee of Stanford (5-3) while losing to Rose (1-5), both AFA fencers (2-5 vs. Stockdale, 4-5 vs. French) and the SJU entrants (3-5 vs. both) ... plenty of challenging epee bouts await ND on Friday, including vs. OSU's Denis Tolkachev and Christian Rivera, Petraszek and his teammate Wojciech Dudek, Thompson and fellow Princeton standout Ben Solomon, and Columbia's William Verigan.

MEN'S SABRE (sophomores Patrick Ghattas and Matt Stearns, paired with Columbia's Paul Reyfman)

Round 7 – vs. Ohio State's Adam Crompton and Jason Rogers and Detroit's Jaroslaw Jelinek

Round 8 – vs. Penn State's Franz Boghicev and Ian Farr and NYU's Andrew Magee

Round 9 – vs. Stanford's Curtis Andrus and Jon Pearlstein and Yale's Christopher Peterson

Current Standings (after Thursday's 14 bouts): (4) Ghattas, (11) Stearns, (8) Reyfman, (6) Crompton, (2) Rogers, (10) Jelinek, (1) Boghicev, (15) Farr, (12) Magee, (13) Andrus, (20) Pearlstein, (23) Pearlstein

Highlight Bouts: vs. Ohio State's Adam Crompton ('03 and '04 NCAA champion) and Jason Rogers (3rd at '02 and '03 NCAAs; '04 Olympian/dnf in college season), Penn State's Ian Farr (5th at '04 NCAAs) and Franz Boghicev (top newcomer), and NYU's Andrew Magee (8th at '04 NCAAs, 14 in '03).

Series Head-to-Head Notes for Ghattas and Stearns vs. Friday's Sabre Opponents (21-24):

Ohio State (3-17) – Ghattas (2-4 overall) has won his past two bouts vs. Crompton (5-2 in MFC team bout, 5-4 at Regional), after losing to him at the '05 ND Duals (2-5), in the '04 NCAAs (4-5), at the '04 Regional (1-5) and in the '04 MFCs (6-15) ... Stearns has lost all seven of his college bouts vs. Crompton (0-4 in '05, including 11-15 in the MFC semifinals and 1-5 at the Regional) ... Ghattas went 1-2 vs. Rogers during the '05 college season, winning at the Regional (5-3) after loses at the BYU Duals (3-5) and ND Duals (1-5) ... Stearns is 0-4 vs. Rogers this year (2-5 at Regional).

Detroit (4-0) – Ghattas (3-0) defeated Jaroslaw Jelinek at the '05 ND Duals (5-1), the '05 Midwest Regional (5-2) and in the finals of the MFC individual sabre championship (15-4) ... Stearns (1-0) also beat Jelinek at the '05 Regional (5-4)

Penn State (3-3) – Ghattas beat Farr at the '04 PSU Duals (5-2) but then lost to him in the '04 NCAAs and the '05 ND Duals (both 3-5) ... Stearns owns a pair of wins over Farr (5-2 at '04 PSU Duals, 5-4 at '05 ND Duals; 2-5 loss at '04 NCAAs)

NYU (3-2) – Ghattas has swept Magee in three previous college bouts (5-3 at '04 and '05 NYU Duals, 5-2 at '04 NCAAs) ... Stearns has dropped two bouts vs. Magee (3-5 at '04 NYU Duals, 2-5 at '04 NCAAs)

Stanford (7-2) – Ghattas is undefeated against both Jonathan Pearlstein (both 5-2 wins at the '04 and '05 NYU Duals) and Curtis Andrus (5-1 at the '04 NCAA round-robin and 5-4 at the '05 NYU Duals) ... Stearns has split against Pearlstein (a 5-4 win at the '04 NYU Duals and a 4-5 loss at the '05 NYU Duals) and 2-1 vs. Andrus (a 5-4 victory at the '04 NYU Duals and a 5-2 win in '05, with a 1-5 loss sandwiched between at the '04 NCAA round-robin

Yale (1-0) – Ghattas scored a 5-0 victory over Christopher Peterson at the '04 NYU Duals.

DAY-ONE NOTES – Ghattas (11-3) trails only Penn State newcomer Franz Boghicev (13-1) and OSU's Jason Rogers (12-2) in the sabre standings, with Harvard's Tim Hagaman and SJU's Sergey Isayenko also at 11-3 ... Ghattas swept the SJU tandem of Isayenko (5-0) and Nijmy Cadet (5-1) while also posting noteworthy wins over Hagaman (5-4), Columbia's Alexander Krul (5-1) and Paul Reyfman (5-3) ... his losses came vs. Stearns (3-5), Harvard's David Jakus (4-5) and Ben Igoe of Rutgers (0-5) ... Stearns (8-5) is 11th and on pace for All-America honors, thanks to key wins over Cadet (5-3), Reyfman (5-4) and UNC's Wesley Newkirk (5-3) ... Stearns dropped bouts to Isayenko (3-5), Krul (2-5), Jakus (3-5), Igoe (0-5) and Haverford's Christian Flanders (3-5) ... Friday's bouts for the Irish include facing Rogers and his OSU teammate Adam Crompton (the '03 and '04 NCAA champ) in addition to taking on the tough grouping of Boghicev, PSU teammate Ian Farr and NYU's Andrew Magee.

MEN'S FOIL (freshman Jakub Jedrkowiak, paired with Stanford's Steve Gerberman, Princeton's Alejandro Bras)

Round 5 – vs. Penn State's Non Panchan and Jeffrey Chang and Johns Hopkins foilist Nick Marchuk

Round 6 – vs. Cal State Fullerton's Alex Decker and Brian Fraser and UC-San Diego's Cameron Sprowles

Round 7 – vs. Columbia's Jeremy Sinkin and Scott Sugimoto and M.I.T.'s Spencer Sugimoto

Current Standings (after Thursday's 14 bouts): (6) Jedrkowiak, (1) Panchan, (11) Chang, (23) Marchuk, (13) Decker, (12) Fraser, (22) Sprowles, (14) J. Sinkin, (8) Scott Sugimoto, (24) Spencer Sugimoto

Highlight Bouts: vs. PSU's Non Panchan ('02 and '03 NCAA champ, '01 runner-up, DNF in '04 due Olympic qualifying attempt) and Columbia's Jeremy Sinkin (4th in '04, 10th in '02, 16th in '01).

Jedrkowiak Head-to-Head Series vs. Friday's Foil Opponents (4-2):

Penn State (0-1) – lost to Panchan (1-5) at '05 ND Duals...also lost title bout to Panchan (6-15) at Penn State Open in fall of '04...did not fence Chang during the '05 college season.

Johns Hopkins (1-0) – posted a 5-2 win over Nick Marchuk at the '05 NYU Duals

Cal State Fullerton (2-0) – swept CSF's Alex Decker (5-1) and Brian Fraser (5-3) at '05 ND Duals

Columbia (1-1) – beat Jeremy Sinkin (5-0) and lost to Scott Sugimoto (0-5) at '05 NYU Duals

Note: Jedrkowiak has not yet fenced college bouts vs. Cameron Sprowles (UC-San Diego) and Spencer Sugimoto (M.I.T.).

DAY-ONE NOTES – Jedrkowiak had an impressive 9-5 start in his NCAA Championships debut and, at 9-5, is just one win out of the top four (tied for 6th) ... former two-time NCAA champion Non Panchan of Penn State leads the foil race (13-1), followed by Penn's Ron Berkowsky (12-2), Ohio State's Boaz Ellis (the '04 NCAA champ, when Panchan did not compete due to Olympic qualifying) at 11-3 and two others tied at 10-4 (Nitai Kfir of St. John's and NYU's Gabe Sinkin) ... Jedrkowiak noteworthy wins came vs. SJU's Henry Kennard (5-4), OSU's Will Jeter (5-1), NYU's Sinkin (5-3), Stanford's Steve Gerberman (5-2) and Harvard's Enoch Woodhouse (5-3) ... he lost to Ellis (1-4), Kfir (1-5) and Berkowski (2-5) while also dropping bouts to Penn's Mike Galligan (4-5) and Duke's Jackson McClam (4-5) ... Jedrkowiak's key Friday bouts include PSU's Panchan and Jeff Chang and Columbia's Jeremy Sinkin.