

NOTRE DAME BASEBALL GAMES NOTES

vs. Creighton (April 12, 2003)

The Notre Dame baseball team (23-6, 7-1 BIG EAST) – riding a 14-game winning streak (21-2 in last 23) and ranked as high as 16th – steps out of conference for a pair of games in Omaha vs. Creighton (12-18) ... Saturday's game will provide the Irish a return to Rosenblatt Stadium (site of the College World Series), with the game at 4:30 CDT (the teams then will play at CU on Sunday at noon).

MEDIA COVERAGE – All of Notre Dame's 2003 regular-season and postseason games again will be broadcast by South Bend-based WDND 1620 AM (and its sister station, WNDV 1490) ... the broadcasts are available via the internet at www.und.com (College Sports Pass subscription required) ... [und.com](http://www.und.com) also provides GameTracker livestats on the website's main page, for all home games and select road games (including the Creighton games) ... Saturday's game will be broadcast live in Nebraska by NETV (channel 12) and will be rebroadcast on April 22 and 23 by the new College Sports Television (Direct TV channel 610, see www.cstv.com) ... a webcast of the game can be viewed at <http://www.whatifsports.com/mlb-1/manage.asp?teamid=202948> ... see www.gocreighton.com for more information on the Bluejays.

Pitching Matchups

Game 1: ND – soph. RHP **Chris Niesel** (3.11, 3-1, 46.1 IP, 45 Ks, 8 BB, 40 H, .225 opp. avg.)
 CU – jr. LHP **Tom Oldham** (3.18, 5-2, 45.1 IP, 44 Ks, 13 BB, 39 H, .231 opp. avg.)

Game 2: ND – sr. RHP **Ryan Kalita** (2.57, 2-0, 28 IP, 22 Ks, 16 BB, 20 H, .206 opp. avg.)
 CU – fr. RHP **Eric Wordekemper** (5.28, 1-1, 29.0 IP, 34 Ks, 15 B, 23 H, .215 opp. avg.)

Chris Niesel – 2003 game-by-game (all starts)

* - named BIG EAST pitcher of the week

Date	Opponent	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	HR	WP	HB	GO	Score	W-L	ERA
2/21	vs. Dayton (@ASU)	6.0	6	4	4	2	1	0	1	0	10	10-9	–	6.00
2/28	vs. Nebraska (Metrodome)	4.0	9	6	6	1	2	1	0	0	6	1-7	L	9.00
3/8	vs Vanderbilt (@UNF)	8.0	3	1	0	0	9	0	1	2	10	3-1	–	5.00
3/13	*vs. Eastern Illinois (@UNF)	8.0	2	2	0	2	9	0	1	0	7	3-2	W	3.46
3/23	at Villanova	7.1	5	2	2	0	11	0	0	0	6	2-3	–	3.24
3/29	Georgetown	7.0	6	2	2	1	9	0	0	0	7	6-2	W	3.12
4/6	at St. John's	6.0	9	3	2	2	4	0	1	0	10	11-3	W	3.11
Totals	46.1	40	20	16	8	45	1	4	2	66		3-1	3.11	

Niesel's Nine-Inning Averages: 7.7 hits, 1.6 walks, 8.7 Ks, 10.9 groundouts (6.2 IP per outing)

Chris Niesel – Career Stats

Year	ERA	W-L	GP/GS	CG	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	2B-3B-HR	BF/B/Avg	WP	HB
2002	3.36	4-0	14/11	0	2	72.1	68	33	27	18	62	17-0-7	307/.241	2	4
2003	3.11	3-1	7/7	1	0	46.1	40	20	16	8	45	12-2-1	190/.225	4	2
Totals	3.26	7-1	21/18	1	2	118.2	108	53	43	26	107	29-2-8	468/.235	6	6

NIESEL NOTES

* Ranks 9th among BIG EAST pitchers in ERA (3.11), plus 2nd in strikeouts (45, two back of BC's Chris Lambert), 3rd in innings (46.1) and 8th in low opponent batting average (.225).

* Since suffering the only loss of his ND career (Feb. 28 vs. Nebraska), **Chris Niesel** has dominated in his last five outings to the tune of a 1.49 ERA, a .188 opponent batting average and nearly a 9-to-1 K-to-walk ratio (42/5) during those five starts.

* **25-2 in last 27** decisions (13-0 as senior at Aquinas HS, 7-1 at ND, 3-1 in '02 Cape Cod League, 2-0 in ND Blue-Gold series)

* Has allowed just **one run**, four hits (.167 opp. avg.) and no walks in the **1st inning** run this season (7 IP, 10 Ks) while allowing **no runs in the 4th** (7 IP, 4 H, .160, 4 Ks, 0 BB) ... has averaged nearly 20 outs per 9 IP via Ks (8.7) or groundouts (10.9).

* Owns a **5.6 season K-to-walk** ratio that would rank 4th in ND history ... his **4.12 career K-to-BB** ratio (107/26) is ahead of Alan Walania's ND record (4.00).

* Situational pitching: .237 opp. batting with 2 outs, .222 with runners on; .312 opponent leadoff on-base pct.

* His season **walk average of 1.55/9 IP** would rank 9th in ND history ... his **1.97 career walk avg.** is 5th in the ND record book (best since '94).

* Has racked up 45 Ks in '03, on pace for 99 (would rank 6th in ND history) ... his .225 opp. batting avg. would rank 10th (since '91).

* 10th all-time ND pitcher with **multiple double-digit K games** in his career (10 vs. Southern Illinois in '02, 11 vs. Villanova in '03) and 5th to do so in the 9-year Mainieri era (the others are Brad Lidge, Tim Kalita, Aaron Heilman and Danny Tamayo) ... also owns four 9-K games in his ND career (three in '03).

* Combines with John Axford (12 Ks vs. WMU) as 10th pair of ND **teammates ever to post double-digit Ks** in the same season ... the others include Ron Mottl and Dick Bunker ('55), Jim Sholl and Don Wolfe ('75), the 1977 trio of Sholl, Bob Hughes, and Mike Bobinski, David Sinnes and Al Walania ('93), Darin Schmalz and Christian Parker ('96), the '98 trio of Brad Lidge, Alex Shilliday and Tim Kalita – and Aaron Heilman with Kalita ('99), Drew Duff ('00) and Danny Tamayo ('01).

* His 7-1 career record could include upwards of eight more wins (due to lack of run support or lost leads by the bullpen), with his 2002 season also interrupted by a bout with mononucleosis.

* Turned in a dominating **2002 postseason** with 2.05 ERA in five outings (four starts), with 22 Ks, 7 BB and 23 hits allowed in 26.1 IP (he won the 3-1 clincher at top-ranked Florida State in the NCAA Super-Regional round and then had a strong CWS start vs. Rice).

QUICK NOTES ON THE ND HITTERS (in probable batting order)

(1) Steve Sollmann (Jr., 2B; Cincinnati, OH ... preseason All-American; all-BIG EAST in '01, '02)

- * Saw 9-game hitting streak end vs. Western Michigan (4/9), with multiple hits in five of last eight games
- * Has gone hitless in consecutive games just once this season (in Villanova doubleheader)
- * Leads team in batting (.383), runs (34), hits (46), total bases (67), walks (12), stolen bases (18) and leadoff on-base pct. (.605), 2nd in home runs (3), triples (3), RBI (24) and pct. of runners advanced (.632), 3rd in slugging pct. (.558) and 2-out batting (.353), 4th in on-base pct. and batting with runners in scoring position (.395)
- * Ranks 9th among BIG EAST players in batting avg., plus 1st in runs, SBs and total bases, 3rd in hits, 4th in 3Bs, 9th in RBI, 10th in slugging and 14th in HRs
- * Situational hitting: leads team in leadoff on-base pct. (.605), 2nd in pct. of runners advanced (.632), 3rd in 2-out batting (.353), 4th in batting with runners in scoring position (.395)
- * Career vs. Creighton: 5-for-12, RBI, 2 R, BB, SB, SAC, K
- * Had game-tying, 9th-inning single up the middle in 2002 CWS comeback win over Rice (5-3; after Steve Stanley's 1-out triple and before Brian Stavisky's game-ending home run)
- * Already 7th in ND history with 47 career stolen bases (18 in '02)
- * Picked up 200th career hit at St. John's (now 203; ND record for hits by junior is Steve Stanley's 267)
- * Joins classmate Javi Sanchez (11 BB/8 Ks) as only ND starters with more walks (12) than Ks (9) in 2003
- * Has collected hits in 23 of 29 games, with 16 multi-hit games (five 3-hit games, plus 4-for-4 in gm 2 vs. Georgetown)
- * Shifted to leadoff spot on Spring Break trip, after batting in No. 2 spot for most of his ND career
- * Twice BIG EAST player of the week (8-for-17 in week one, then 11-for-23 in first six games of Spring Break trip)
- * Hit 3-run inside-the-park HR in 3-2 win over Eastern Illinois
- * Rated BIG EAST's top defensive 2B for 2003 (per Baseball America)

(2) Brennan Grogan (Fr., CF; Tequesta, FL)

- * Has hits in 16 of the last 20 games (11 of them 1-hit games)
- * First on team in triples (5), sac. bunts (5) and 2-out batting (.400), 2nd in stolen bases (9) and batting with runners in scoring position (.400), 3rd in runs (23) and 5th in batting avg. (.315)
- * Leads BIG EAST in overall triples, 7th in SBs
- * Made switch to CF and 2-hole on Spring Break trip
- * Hit go-ahead triple in 13th inning of 3-1 win over Vanderbilt

(3) Matt Edwards (So., 3B/1B; Mechanicsville, VA)

- * Hit 17-for-33 (.515) in the last 10 games, with 19 RBI in that stretch
- * First on team in home runs (4), slugging pct. (.596), doubles (9), RBI (33), 2-out RBI (14) and batting with runners in scoring pos. (.444), 2nd in batting avg. (.375), hits (39), total bases (62) and 2-out batting (.389), 3rd in walks (11) and on-base pct. (.442)
- * Ranks 11th among BIG EAST players in batting avg., plus 2nd in RBI (Virginia Tech's Wyatt Toregas has 38), 4th in 2Bs, 4th in slugging, 5th in TBs, 8th in HRs
- * Already has totaled 11 multi-RBI games, including four 3-RBI games and 4 RBI in second game vs. Georgetown.
- * Also owns 11 multi-hit games (five 3-hit games, plus 4-for-5 in nightcap at St. John's)
- * Saw 9-game hitting streak end in doubleheader vs. Chicago State and Bowling Green (0-for-4)
- * Named BIG EAST player of the week (3/31-4/6) after leading ND during 4-0 week hits and batting average (9-for-14, .643), RBI (10) home runs (3), total bases (21) and slugging pct. (1.500), plus seven runs, two walks, a triple, double, stolen base and just one strikeout from his key No. 3 spot in the batting order ... hit 6-for-9 in the doubleheader sweep at St. John's, with five RBI and a pair of booming home runs to dead-center field.
- * Has made four starts at 1B, with the first coming on Spring Break trip
- * Missed most of 2002 season due to broken leg (vs. USC in Round Rock, ninth game of '02)

(4) Kris Billmaier (Sr., RF; Woodinville, WA)

- * Looking to snap out of 7-for-31 (.226), 4-RBI slump in last 10 games ... has just two multi-hit games in last 14, with only one multi-RBI game in the last 15
- * Second on team in doubles (8) and home runs (3), 3rd in hits (36), RBI (22), total bases (55) and leadoff on-base pct. (.500), 4th in batting avg. (.316) and runs (21), 5th in slugging (.482) and batting with runners in scoring position (.333)

(5) Javi Sanchez (Jr., C; Miami, FL)

- * Has gone hitless in consecutive games just once all season (vs. Detroit and Valparaiso)
- * 3rd on team in walks (11), 4th in runs (21) hits (30) and doubles (6), 5th in total bases (41) and on-base pct. (.400)
- * Has hit five of his six home runs with the Irish away from home, including 3-run blast to tie 2002 CWS opener vs. Stanford (3-3, 4-3 loss)
- * Joins classmate Steve Sollmann (12 BB/9 Ks) as only ND starters with more walks (11) than Ks (8) in 2003
- * Prep 2B who started at SS in 2002 after injuries to Matt Macri and Matt Edwards

(6) Matt Macri (So., SS; Clive, IA ... preseason All-American)

- * Went hitless in St. John's doubleheader, after collecting hits in seven previous eight games (four multi-hit games)
- * Batting .378 (14-for-37) in last 12 games (7 RBI, 11 runs)
- * 1st on team in walks (12), 3rd in doubles (7) and sac bunts (4)
- * Missed most of 2002 season due to "Tommy John" reconstructive elbow surgery
- * Nation's No. 2-rated college SS prospect for 2003 draft (per *Baseball America*)

(7) Cody Rizzo (Fr., DH/LF; Temecula, CA)

- * Batting 6-for-10 in last three games (6 RBI, 8 runs, home run)
- * Leads team in hit-by-pitch (12, three shy of ND record), 2nd in runs (28), slugging pct. (.587) and on-base pct. (.459), 3rd in batting avg. (.363), home runs (3), doubles (7), RBI (22) and 2-out RBI (8), 4th in total bases (47), 5th in hits (29)
- * Situational hitting: 2nd in leadoff on-base pct. (.567) and batting with runners in scoring position (.400), 5th in pct. of runners advanced (.578)
- * Classic utility player who has made appearances at CF, LF, DH and C, also batting in leadoff spot early in season
- * Excellent baserunner who was rare 2-sport star in soccer/baseball as a prep (California HS soccer is played in the fall)

(8) Craig Cooper (Fr., LF/DH; Plainview, NY)

- * Hit 7-for-15 (7 R, RBI) in last six games played (dnp in St. John's opener)
- * Third on team in stolen bases (7) and walks (11), 4th in leadoff on-base pct. (.471), 5th in overall on-base pct. (.404),
- * Leads team with .400 batting average in BIG EAST games (8-for-20, 6 R, 2 RBI)

or Steve Andres (Fr., DH; Napa, CA)

- * Hit 7-for-16 (7 RBI, 7 R, HR) over last seven games played (dnp vs. WMU), after collecting just one hit and one RBI in his previous 19 at-bats (dating back to the second game at Arizona State)
- * Leads team in on-base pct. (.467), 2nd in hit-by-pitch (5), 3rd in 2-out batting (.333), 4th in slugging pct. (.543), 5th in leadoff on-base pct. (.605)

(9) Greg Lopez (Fr., 3B; Upper Arlington, OH)

- * Hit 6-for-12 (4 RBI, 3 R) in three games prior to St. John's series (had no ABs vs. SJU, after hit-by-pitch), then 2-for-10 in last three midweek games
- * Effective situational hitter who ranks 5th on team in RBI (15, despite totaling just 18 hits), also leading team in pct. of runners advanced (.644, 29-of-45) and 3rd in sac. bunts (3)

or Joe Thaman (Jr., 1B; St. Louis, MO)

- * Hit 2-for-4 with pair of 2-run, bases-loaded singles in second game at St. John's, ending 1-for-22 slump
- * Leads team in sac. bunts (5), 4th in 2-out RBI (7), 5th in 2-out batting (.300)
- * Rated BIG EAST's top defensive 1B in 2002 and '03 (per *Baseball America*)

MIDSEASON CHECKUP

With 29 games in the books, here's a look at how Notre Dame has answered 10 preseason questions:

Who would emerge as the new leadoff hitter, at a spot held the previous four seasons mostly by Steve Stanley (and fellow 2002 grads Ken Meyer and Paul O'Toole)?

Sophomore SS Matt Macri and freshman OF Cody Rizzo were tried at the leadoff spot in the first seven games before ND moved junior 2B Steve Sollmann up from the 2-hole into the top spot ... Sollmann has responded by batting .385 as the leadoff hitter (35-for-91, 28 R, 22 RBI, 3 HR, 2 3B, 3 2B, 9 BB, 13 SB) and reaching base in 56 percent of his leadoff plate appearances (any inning) since the lineup shift (he leads the team with a .605 overall leadoff OB pct.).

Who would fill the gap in center field, where Stanley started all 254 games from 1999-2002?

Freshmen Craig Cooper and Cody Rizzo were tried in center during the first two weeks of the season but their classmate Brennan Grogan has settled in at the position, starting 21 of the last 22 games at CF.

Who would step into the No. 3 spot in the batting order, occupied in 2002 by LF Brian Stavisky (who signed as a junior 6th-round pick of the Oakland A's)?

Junior corner IF Matt Edwards has made 21 starts in the 3-hole while ranking as one of the team's most pivotal players in 2003 ... Edwards – who missed most of the '02 season with a broken leg – is batting .375 with 33 RBI and 4 home runs in 28 games played, with those numbers comparable to Stavisky's '02 numbers (.394, 57 RBI, 9 HR in 50 GP).

How would sophomores Matt Macri (SS) and Matt Edwards (3B/1B) return from their respective injuries that held them out for most of the 2002 season:

Edwards (see note above) has been arguably the key factor to ND's first-half success (with Steve Sollmann's production again meeting his usual high standard) while Macri – who missed most of '02 with ACL elbow surgery – has overcome a slow start to hit .378 and make just three errors in the last 12 games (he made four Es in the first four games and was batting just .211 in late March) ... Macri also has showcased his arm strength to throw out several batters

Who would meet the challenge as the staff's No. 3 starter, after the preseason surgery to ace Grant Johnson?

Ryan Kalita has stepped up as the No. 3 starter in the past few weeks, helping overcome the loss of both Johnson and Kalita's fellow senior RHP Peter Ogilvie ... Kalita (11-0 in his ND career) is 4-0 with a 2.31 ERA and .208 opp. batting avg. this season (26 Ks, 16 BB, 26 H in 35 IP).

Would the Irish experience a dropoff in power, most notably due to the loss of O'Toole (11 HRs in '02) and Stavisky (9)?

The 2003 team's current home run total (17) actually matches the 29-game HR total by the '02 squad but the Irish may not have a double-digit HR hitter on the '03 squad, with Matt Edwards (4) the current long-ball leader ... ND's current 21-2 run is all the more noteworthy when considering that cleanup hitter Kris Billmaier has not homered in the last 27 games.

Would the Irish have speed and good basestealing ability, after the loss of Stanley and O'Toole?

The return of sophomore SS Matt Macri and the addition of freshmen such as Brennan Grogan, Cody Rizzo, Craig Cooper and Greg Lopez has added some quality baserunners to the 2003 lineup – with the current SB total (40) well ahead of the 2002 team's SBs (29) at the 29-game point.

How would junior Javi Sanchez handle the position switch from the middle infield to catcher?

Sanchez – a prep 2B who filled in at SS in '02 – has made an impressive transition behind the dish while doing a solid job batting in the 5-hole (.313, 21 R, 13 RBI, HR, 3B, 6 2B) ... Sanchez will be looking to cut down his passed balls (11) in the second half and has made major strides in throwing out attempted basestealers, due to his strong arm and agility behind the plate.

How quickly and to what degree would the freshman position players make an impact?

Five freshman position players – DH/LF Cody Rizzo, CF Brennan Grogan, 3B Greg Lopez, DH Steve Andres and LF/DH Craig Cooper – played key roles in the first half of the 2003 season, combining to make 99 starts while batting a combined .318 (114-for-358) ... their biggest statistical contributions include 62% of ND's times hit-by-pitch, 50% of the team's triples, 43% of the stolen bases and 42% of the runs scored (94 of 224).

Would the offense do its share to complement the talented core of veteran pitchers?

The 2003 team (.315) – which has taken on a more righthanded slant (after the departure of five lefthanded-hitting position starters) – actually is batting 13 points higher than the 2002 team (.302) at the 29-game point ... the most impressive number has been the team's 10 "big innings" (5-plus runs) in the last eight games ... eight of the team's nine starting position players currently are batting above .300.

SERIES NOTES – Notre Dame and Creighton are slated to meet for the second and third time this season, in addition to splitting a pair of meetings in 2002 (back-to-back games in Texas, at Round Rock and San Antonio) ... the Irish hold a **5-3 all-time series lead**, with all but one of the games played on a neutral field ... the first meeting between the teams came in 1983 (a 6-5 Creighton win, at Oral Roberts) ... the teams then split a pair of Irish Baseball Classic games in 1997 (at San Antonio's Wolff Stadium), with the Irish winning two IBC games vs. the Bluejays in 1999 ... ND opened 1999 NCAA Tournament play with an 8-1 win over Creighton (at Eck Stadium) ... Creighton held on to beat ND at the 2002 Round Rock Express Classic (8-6) but the Irish won the rematch two days later in San Antonio at the IBC (6-2) ... ND's current 14-game winning streak includes a 10-3 victory over Creighton in the Kennel Club Classic (that game was played at Jacksonville University, on March 15).

RECAPPING THE LAST THREE ND-CREIGHTON GAMES

* Creighton opened with a four-run 1st inning and held off a 9th-inning rally by ND, 8-6, in final-round action at the 2002 Express College Classic (held at Dell Diamond, in Round Rock Texas) ... the Irish, who brought the tying run to the plate after scoring twice in the 9th, stranded 12 and hit into three double plays ... **J.P. Gagne** (5 H, 3 BB, 6 Ks) allowed just two earned runs in his six-inning stint but the Blue Jays also scored four unearned runs versus Gagne ... **Steve Stanley** led the Irish offense (4-for-5) ... **Matt Buckingham** (5 IP, 2 R, 5 H, 3 BB, 2 Ks) picked up the win and **Mike Perkins** notched a rocky save (4 IP, 4 R, 9 H, BB) ... **Scott Allen's** 2-run double keyed Creighton's early explosion.

* The Irish avenged the loss two days later in San Antonio (6-2), led by **John Axford's** pitching (7 IP, 4 H, 2 UER, 6 Ks, 9 GOs) and **Brian Stavisky's** bat (2-for-4, 3 RBI, 2 R, HR, 3B) ... **Steve Grasley** (4.2 IP, 7 H, 5 R, 2 BB, 4 Ks) took the loss while **Matt Daegas** (2-for-2, R) led the Creighton offense.

* ND closed play at the 2003 Kennel Club Classic with a 10-3 win over CU ... **Axford** (6 IP, 5 H, 2 R, 2 BB, 8 Ks) again had the win while **Chris Appuhn** (3.2 IP, 9 H, 6 R/5 ER, 2 Ks) took the loss ... ND's 1-4 batters combined to hit 9-for-15 with six runs and seven RBI, led by **Steve Sollmann** (3-for-5, RBI, 2 R) and **Matt Edwards** (3-for-4, 3 RBI, R, 2 2B) ... **Gabe Lapito** and **Daegas** both homered for the Jays.

ND-CREIGHTON TIES

* ND associate head coach **Brian O'Connor** – now in his 9th year on the Irish coaching staff – played at Creighton in the early 1990s ('90-'93) and was a key pitcher on CU's 1991 CWS team ... O'Connor posted a 20-13 career record, seven saves and a 3.78 ERA in four seasons with the Jays (5-3, 73 IP in '91) ... as a freshman in 1990, he went 6-2 and set the CU record for season ERA (1.91) ... O'Connor went on to move into the Creighton top-six for career wins, appearances, innings and starts ... O'Connor was the pitching coach at Creighton in '94, in the first year under current head coach Jack Dahm ... Dahm played at Creighton from '86-'89 and was a CU assistant coach during all four seasons of O'Connor's career.

* O'Connor and Dahm both played at Creighton for head coach **Jim Hendry** ('85-'91), who now serves as the Chicago Cubs general manager ... Hendry and ND head coach Paul Mainieri are longtime friends, dating back to their coaching days at Miami's Columbus High School ... Hendry served as the keynote speaker for the ND baseball program's Opening Night Dinner on Feb. 4 (nearly 1,000 area baseball fans attended).

* ND's appearance in the 2002 CWS brought back the memory of former Irish CF **Gene Duffy**, the only non-surviving member of ND's 1957 CWS squad ... Duffy was a fan favorite in baseball and basketball – and many viewed ND's 2002 CF and spunky leader Steve Stanley as a second-coming of the dearly-departed Duffy ... Duffy's postgraduate days included working in a variety of coaching and administrative roles at Creighton and with the former Big Eight Conference ... he was credited with helping popularize Omaha as the home of the CWS in the 1960s before his untimely death in the mid-1960s.

* Recent ND pitcher **Scott Cavey** ('97-'00) played at Omaha's Creighton Prep, with his career stats at ND including a 4.20 ERA, 15-4 record and 138 Ks in 165 IP (he ranks 7th in ND history for lowest career walk average, at 2.24 BB per 9 IP).

FRIEND OR FOE?

Several Notre Dame and Creighton players are former teammates, including:

* ND senior RHP **J.P. Gagne** (Bloomington, Minn.) hit a home run vs. Creighton's **Steve Grasley** in an American Legion state title game.

* ND sophomore RHP **John Axford** and Creighton ace **Tom Oldham** played on the Cape Cod League's Hyannis Mets in the summer of 2002.

* ND sophomore SS **Matt Macri** (Clive, Iowa) has ties to a pair of Creighton players: senior OF **Ryan Fitzgerald** (Dowling HS) and sophomore IF **Mike Sirianni** (Perfect Game Wooden Bat League).

ROAD WARRIORS – Notre Dame's trip to Omaha this week will represent the team's seventh weekend on the road in the last eight weeks, followed by three straight home weekends and then the season-ending BIG EAST series at Rutgers and Virginia Tech ... after the Creighton games, the Irish are scheduled to play 12 straight home games, followed by the annual ND- Michigan game in Grand Rapids and four more home games (before heading to Rutgers).

NOTRE DAME CAREER STATS VS. CREIGHTON ('03 unless noted)

Steve Sollmann – 5-for-12, RBI, 2 R, BB, SB, SAC, K ('03: 3-for-5, RBI, 2 R, SB, K)
 Brennan Grogan – 1-for-4, RBI, 3 R, BB, SB, K
 Matt Edwards – 3-for-4, 3 RBI, R, 2 2B, HBP, CS
 Kris Billmaier – 2-for-11, 3 RBI, R, 2B, 2 BB, SF, 3 Ks ('03: 2-for-2, 2 RBI, R, 2 BB, SF)
 Javi Sanchez – 4-for-13, 2 RBI, 2 R, 2B, HBP, K, 4 E, PB ('03: 1-for-5, RBI, PB)
 Matt Macri – 4-for-12, 3 RBI, 2 R, BB, 4 Ks, E
 Joe Thaman – 2 GP, 0-for-2, RBI, K ('03: 0-for-2, RBI, K)
 Cody Rizzo – 2-for-3, R, 2B, HBP
 Greg Lopez – 0-for-3, RBI, R, HBP, K
 Alex Nettey – 1-for-1

Craig Cooper – 1-for-3, R, BB, K
 Steve Andres – 0-for-1
 Tim Murray – 0-for-1, K

Ryan Kalita – 2 IP, 2 H, K

Roth – P-5-1 Fitzgerald – F-8 Daegas – 1B-6 Schumacher – 6-3

J.P. Gagne – GS, 0-1, 6 IP, 5 H (HR), 6 R/2 ER, 3 BB, 6 Ks, WP

Roth – 1B-LS/SB/R, BB/CS, F-8 Fitzgerald – BB/SB/SB/R, KL, 1B-MI/SB
 Gradonville – L-4, L-7, 1-3 Lapito – E6T, 4-3

Matt Laird – 2 GP, 2 IP, 3 R, 6 H (HR), BB, K, HB

Fitzgerald – 1-4 SAC Gradonville – 1B-LS Lapito – 1B-6 Roth – 5-3

Brandon Vioria – IP, H, K

Fitzgerald – 2B-LC Suarez – KL Schultz – 3-1 Sirianni – 1-3

CREIGHTON CAREER STATS vs. NOTRE DAME ('03 unless noted)

Gabe Lapito – 3-for-12, RBI, 2 R, HR, 2 Ks, 4 E ('03: 1-for-5, RBI, R, HR, 2 Ks, 2 E)
 Mike Sirianni – 0-for-2
 Matt Daegas – 3-for-6, RBI, 2 R, HR, BB, 2 Ks
 B.J. Schumacher – 0-for-4, 2 Ks ('03: 0-for-3, 2 Ks)
 Ryan Fitzgerald – 3-for-9, RBI, R, 2 2B, 2 BB, 3 SB, SAC, 3 Ks
 Tony Roth – 2-for-10, RBI, R, 3 BB, 2 Ks, 1-2 SB ('03: 1-for-3, BB, SB)
 Matt Hammer – 0-for-2, K Dave Schultz – 1-for-5 ('03: 1-for-4)
 Pete Wiedewitsch – 1-for-4, R Zach Daegas – 0-for-1
 Alex Suarez – 0-for-1, K Dan Norquist – 0-for-2, K, HB
 Chris Gradoville ('02) – 2-for-7, R, K Tom Oldham – 0-for-6, K

Chris Appuhn – GS, 0-1, 3.2 IP, 6 R/5 ER, 9 H, 2 Ks, WP, HB

Sollmann – 1B-RC/R, 1B-LS/RBI/R, F-9 Grogan – 1B-RS/R, E6F/R
 Edwards – 2B-RC/RBI, 1B-RC/RBI/CS/5-3 Billmaier – F-7/SF/RBI, 1B-LS/RBI. 2B-RC
 Macri – 6-3, KS Sanchez – F-9, P-4
 Cooper – 5-3, 1B-5 Rizzo – HB/R. 1B-MI
 Thaman – dnp Lopez – HBP, KS

Adam Rider – IP, R, 2 H, BB, K, WP

Billmaier – BB/R Sanchez – 1B-6/RBI Thaman – FC
 Nettey – 1B-6 Andres – P6 Murray – KL

Matt Garland – 0.1 IP, 2 R, H, BB, K

Sollmann – KS Grogan – BB/SB/R Edwards – 2B-8/RBI

Jeff Daneff – 3 IP, R, 2 H, 2 BB, 3 Ks, HB

Sollmann – 1B-9 Grogan – KS Edwards – HBP
 Billmaier – BB Macri – L-5 Sanchez – P-4, L-8
 Cooper – KS, BB/R Rizzo – 6-3, 2B-RL Thaman – KL
 Lopez – F-9, 6-3/RBI

Steve Grasley – GS, 0-1, 4-2 IP, 5 R, 7 H (HR), 1 BB, 4 Ks

Macri – KS, BB, 1B-LS/R Billmaier – KS, KL Sanchez – 1B-7, KS Sollmann – F-9, 6-3

BIG-INNING BOPPERS – Notre Dame opened the season by posting three “big innings” (5-plus runs) in the first four games but then went 16 games without 5-plus runs in any inning ... that drought ended with a vengeance in **the last nine games**, as the Irish have erupted for **10 big innings** (in all but one of those games, the finale of the Georgetown series) ... the big innings have included three 9-run eruptions (vs. ASU, Georgetown and Detroit) and 6-run innings vs. Newman and St. John’s ... the **2nd inning has produced four “big innings”** (all in the last seven games), with three in the 6th, two in the 3rd and one each in the 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th – with the Irish failing to post 5-plus runs in only the 1st and 9th innings this season (ND has totaled just 11 first-inning runs all season) ... the big innings in this week’s three midweek games accounted for 18 of ND’s 23 total runs (78%) in those games ... here’s a look at ND’s big innings in 2003:

Gm #	Opponent	Big Inning	Final Score
1	Dayton	5 runs in the 7th	W, 10-9
2	Newman	6 runs in the 3rd	W, 15-5
4	Arizona State (gm 2)	9 runs in the 6th	L, 8-14
21	Georgetown (gm 2)	9 runs in the 6th	W, 13-3
23	Detroit	9 runs in the 2nd	W, 15-5
24	Valparaiso	5 runs in the 2nd	W, 13-4
24	Valparaiso	5 runs in the 5th	
25	St. John’s (gm 1)	6 runs in the 3rd	W, 11-3
26	St. John’s (gm 2)	5 runs in the 2nd	W, 18-3
26	St. John’s (gm 2)	5 runs in the 4th	
27	Western Michigan	5 runs in the 8th	W, 7-1
28	Chicago State	8 runs in the 2nd	W, 9-3
29	Bowling Green	5 runs in the 6th	W, 7-2

WIN STREAK HITS 14 – Notre Dame’s 14-game winning streak ranks as **the third-longest of the nine-year Paul Mainieri era** (behind 16 in '01 and '02) and is the 8th double-digit win streak of the Mainieri era ... the Irish have matched the 7th-longest single-season winning streak in the program’s history (5th-best since 1910) – behind the above two streaks, plus an 18-game run in 1991, a 17-game streak in 1907, a 16-game streaks in '88 and a 15-gamer in 1910 ... if ND sweeps Creighton this weekend, the 2003 team would earn a share of the 2nd-longest win streak by an ND team in the last 96 seasons (3rd overall).

WINNING STREAK STATS – ND’s **.341 team batting** avg. in the 14-game win streak includes an average of 13.2 hits and 11.5 runs per nine innings, with the Irish batters totaling more walks (60) than Ks (50) in the streak ... top hitters in the streak include Edwards (.404, 19-for-47, 20 RBI, 11 R, 3 HR, 3B, 5 2B, 8 BB), Rizzo (.400, 16-for-40, 16 RBI, 21 R, 2 HR, 3B, 3 2B, 3 BB, 6 HBP) and his classmates Craig Cooper (.393, 13-for-33, 12 R, 4 RBI, 3B, 7 BB, 3 SB) and Brennan Grogan (.378, 17-for-45, 15 R, 7 RBI, 4 3B, 5 BB, HBP, 5 SB) ... the ND pitchers own a **1.94 staff ERA** and .210 opp. batting avg. in the win streak, with nearly a 3-to-1 K-to-walk ratio (126/44) and 91 hits allowed in 116 innings ...

STRONG FIRST HALF – The current 23-6 record represents one of the program’s best records at this point in the season ... in fact, the program’s all-time history includes **just one 29-game start better than the current 23-6 record:** 23-5-1 in 2001 ... that '01 team won its next 14 games (37-5-1) en route to claiming the nation’s No. 1 ranking (a first for the ND program) ... the only other previous team on a par with the current squad’s 29-game record is the 1989 team, which also owned a 23-6 mark near the midpoint of its season (the 1959 team lost its final game to finish 22-7 while the 2000 squad dropped to 22-7 with a loss to Boston College) ... a win on Saturday would match the 1989 team for the program’s second-best all-time record at the 30-game mark (behind the 24-5-1 in '01) ... the '89 team kept winning until its 33rd game, rising as high as 26-6 ... the quickest seasons to 30 wins have been in the landmark 2001 season (30-5-1) and '89 (30-8).

APRIL SHOWERS OF WINS – Notre Dame has dominated in April during the nine-year Paul Mainieri era (**166-36**, .822), including **46-4** (.920) in April during the past three seasons (20-2 in '01, 19-2 in '02, 7-0 in '03) ... ND’s only April losses in that stretch: vs. Ball State (3-4) and Valparaiso (3-7) in '01, St. John’s (3-4) and Pittsburgh (5-7) in '02.

EXPECTING ECK’S-ELLENC – Notre Dame’s 11-0 loss to Rutgers on May 5, 2002, ended ND’s team-record scoring streak at 231 games ... the Irish have gone **unbeaten (18-0) at Eck Stadium since that loss**, outscoring the opponents 210-85 in those games (average score of 12-5) ... ND also is **30-1 in its last 31 home games**, dating back to the 7-5 loss to Pittsburgh on April 11, 2002 ... now celebrating its 10th year of play at Eck Stadium, the Irish own an all-time record of 229-49 in the facility (.824).

FEARSOME FRESHMAN FIVESOME – Five freshman position players – DH/LF **Cody Rizzo**, CF **Brennan Grogan**, 3B **Greg Lopez**, DH **Steve Andres** and LF/DH **Craig Cooper** – continue to make key contributions this season ... those five players have combined to make 99 starts while batting a combined .318 (114-for-358) ... their biggest statistical contributions include 62% of ND's times hit-by-pitch (23 of 37), 50% of the team's triples (9 of 18) and 42% of the runs scored (94 of 224) – plus 36% of the RBI (71 of 197), 43% of the stolen bases (17 of 40) and 39% of the sac. bunts (9 of 23) ... the above five players also have combined for 36% of the team's hits (114 of 320), 33% of the walks (31 of 95), 22% of the doubles (12 of 54) and five of the team's 17 home runs (29%) ... the "fearsome freshman fivesome" have combined to hit .341 (44-for-129) in the 10 home games, with 34 RBI, 40 runs scored, three doubles, four triples, two home runs, 15 walks and seven stolen bases in their first 10 games at Eck Stadium.

STRONG IN ALL AREAS – Notre Dame is the only team currently ranked among the BIG EAST's top three in overall team batting avg. (**2nd, .315**), ERA (**2nd, 3.33**) and fielding pct. (**1st, .968**) ... the only other team that entered the week ranked in the top four of all those categories is Virginia Tech (first in ERA and fourth in both batting and fielding).

MAKING STRIDES – Here's a comparative look at ND's 29-game stats this season (20-6) compared to the 16-10 start in 2002, with the most noteworthy offensive improvements coming in batting average (10 points higher), runs (+31), triples (+11) and times hit-by-pitch (+16) ... the ND defense has made 11 fewer errors at the 26-game point while the Irish pitchers have allowed an eye-popping 99 fewer hits, with 14 more Ks but also 14 more walks (the staff ERA is nearly identical, with the opponent batting average 24 points lower):

Category	2002	2003	Improvement (Dropoff)
Record	18-11	23-6	4
One-Run Games	4-5	4-1	
Batting Average	.302	.315	.013
Runs	183	224	41
Extra-Base Hits	80	89	9
Slugging Pct.	.425	.453	.028
Home Runs	17	17	--
Triples	7	18	11
Doubles	55	54	(-1)
Walks	104	95	(-9)
Batters' Strikeouts	141	152	(-11)
Hit-By-Pitch	22	37	15
On-Base Pct.	.377	.390	.009
Stolen Bases	29	40	11
Errors	49	37	12
Fielding Pct.	.956	.968	.012
ERA	3.52	3.33	0.19
Walks	88	100	(-12)
Strikeouts Thrown	201	230	29
Opp. Batting Avg.	.263	.237	.033
Hits Allowed	253	227	26
Wild Pitches	16	25	(-9)
Hit Batters	23	18	5

GOOD FOR 40 - Notre Dame owns **14 straight seasons with 40-plus wins**, led by the 50-18 season in 2002, 49 wins in '01, 48 in '89 and '92, 46 in four seasons ('90, '93 '94, '00), 45 in '91 and 44 in '95 ... that's the fourth-longest active 40-win streak in Div. I baseball, behind Florida State (25), Wichita State (25) and Clemson (17).

TWO-YEAR TEAR - Notre Dame's combined victory total from the 2001 (49-13-1) and 2002 (50-18) seasons represented the third-most wins (99) in Division I baseball during that two-year span, trailing only Florida State (107) and South Carolina (106).

BIG SHADOWS - Notre Dame's 2003 roster includes some big bodies, with eight players 6-4 or taller - led by freshman RHP **Ryan Doherty** (7-1, 230), senior 1B **Mike Holba** (6-8, 240), freshman LHP **Tom Thornton** (6-6, 205), sophomore RHPs **Grant Johnson** (6-6, 220) and **John Axford** (6-5, 180), and sophomore 1B **Joe Thaman** (6-4, 215).

RECORD BOOK WATCH – With Notre Dame's season nearing its midpoint, several individual and team records are within reach ... here are some career and season record-book projections (based on 60 games):

Junior 2B Steve Sollmann

- * 46 hits, on pace for 95 and could become 3rd ND player to break 100-hit plateau (Dan Peltier had 115 in 1989, Steve Stanley 102 in 2001 and 118 in '02) ... also on pace for 252 career hits after '03 (would be 7th)
- * 34 runs, on pace for 74 (would best his brother Scott's '95 total of 73 for 7th in ND record book) ... also on pace for 179 career runs at end of '03 (would crack ND top-10)
- * 18 stolen bases, on pace for 37 (could join his brother, 52 in '96, as only ND players with 40-plus) ... already 7th in ND history with 47 SBs, on pace for 66 (5th)
- * .369 career batting avg. would rank 5th in ND history, behind his brother's .372
- * His nine career triples (3 in '03) are three shy of ND top-10 (five back of 3rd)
- * .730 career stolen-base pct. (46-of-63) ranks 10th
- * Already 8th in career fielding assists (413), on pace for 512 (4th)

Freshman CF Brennan Grogan

- * His 5 triples project out to 10 for the season, which would be one back of Scott Sollmann's ND record ('95)
- * 5 sacrifice bunts, on pace for 10 (four shy of ND record held by three players)

Sophomore 3B/1B Matt Edwards

- * 33 RBI, on pace for 68 and shot at ND top-10 (74 would tie for 6th; last ND player with 70-plus RBI was Mike Amrhein's 71 in 1997)

Senior RF Kris Billmaier

- * On pace for 236 at-bats and 731 in his career (would rank 10th in ND history)

Freshman DH/OF Cody Rizzo

- * 12 times hit-by-pitch on pace for 25, well past the ND record of 15 (by Eric Danapilis, in '93)

Senior RHP J.P. Gagne

- * 14 appearances, on pace for 29 (would best his '02 total of 28 for 4th in ND record book) ... also on pace for 93 career appearances, which would be one better than Chris Michalak's ND record (now 3rd at 78, behind Aaron Heilman's 83)
- * On pace for 54-inning season, which would push his career total to 292 (8th in ND history; now 9th at 263)
- * On pace for 6-win season and 27 career wins (would rank 8th, now 10th with 24)
- * 5 saves on pace for 10 (one shy of John Corbin's record 11) ... also on pace for 16 career saves (2nd to Corbin's 20; now 5th with 10)
- * On pace for 48 Ks and 208 in his career (would rank 9th)
- * His career walk avg. of 2.38 BB per 9 IP would rank 9th in ND record book

Sophomore RHP John Axford

- * 2.31 ERA would tie for 21st (13th-best since '69)
- * 5-0 record in six starts, on pace for possible 13-win season (Aaron Heilman went 15-0 in '01, Tom Price 14-5 in '94) ... only five ND pitchers ever have started a season at least 9-0
- * .222 opp. batting avg. would rank 8th in ND record book (since '91)
- * 35 strikeouts on pace for 88 (would rank 12th)

Sophomore RHP Chris Niesel

- * .225 opp. batting avg. would rank 10th in ND record book (since '91)
- * 45 strikeouts on pace for 99 (would rank 6th)
- * Walk average of 1.55/9 IP would rank 9th ... his 1.97 career walk avg. is 5th (best since '94)
- * 5.63 K-to-walk ratio would rank 4th ... his 4.12 career K-to-BB ratio (107/26) is ahead of Alan Walania's ND record (4.00)

Senior RHP Ryan Kalita

- * .208 opp. batting avg. would rank 7th in ND record book (since '91)
- * 2.83 career ERA would rank 6th in ND history (3rd-best since 1970)
- * 11-0 career record, could become 5th ND pitcher to win 14 straight ... needs five more decisions to qualify for career win pct. list

Senior RHP Brandon Vilorio

- * Yet to walk a batter in 10.2 IP (top ratio in ND record book is Tom Price's 0.49 BB per 9 IP, in '94)
- * 2.52 career ERA would rank 4th in ND history (2nd since 1961, behind Aaron Heilman's 2.49)
- * His career walk avg. of 1.39 BB per 9 IP is below the standing ND record (1.64, by Alan Walania)

Team

- * 11.27 hits per game, would rank 2nd behind the 1997 team (11.35)
- * 18 triples, on pace for 42 (1st, record is 41 in '94)
- * 36 times hit-by-pitch, on pace for 83 (1st; record is 75 in '93)
- * 23 sac. bunts, on pace for 53 (3rd)
- * 200 strikeouts thrown, on pace for 462 (3rd, record is 483 in '02)
- * .968 fielding pct. ahead of ND record .965 ('82, '92, '00)

MAINIERI HITS WIN NO. 700 – Ninth-year ND head coach **Paul Mainieri** – now in his 21st overall season – picked up his 700th career coaching victory in the 6-2 series-opening win over Georgetown on Sat., March 29, just 135 games removed from his 600th win (ND's 99 combined wins in '01 and '02 were third-most in nation, behind Florida State's 107 and South Carolina's 106) ... Mainieri's **709-427-1 career record** (.624) includes 180-121 at St. Thomas ('83-'88), 152-158 at Air Force ('89-'94) and 377-148-1 (.718) at ND ('95-'03) ... his ND career includes five BIG EAST titles and five NCAA trips with the Irish ('96, '99-'02), the program's first No. 1 ranking in 2001 and first CWS trip since '57 (in '02) ... he was the nation's only coach to repeat as ABCA regional coach of the year (Midwest), in 2002, and his squads have extended ND's streak of seasons with 40-plus wins to 14 (nation's 4th-longest active streak) ... 31 of his ND players have moved on to pro ball, including 12 drafted in the first 10 rounds and pair of first-round pitchers (Brad Lidge in '98, Aaron Heilman in '01) ... every ND player in the Mainieri era who has completed his eligibility with the Irish has graduated from Notre Dame (46 of 46) while the eight who were signed after their junior seasons have returned to complete or near completion of their graduation requirements (including two-time Academic All-American Brian Stavisky) ... Mainieri owns the best BIG EAST winning pct. in the conference's history (.753, 128-42) ... in 67 BIG EAST series spanning eight seasons, the Irish have won 53 with seven splits and just seven series wins by the opponent (just two of them being 3-game sweeps) ... the Irish have been swept just four times in 65 all-time BIG EAST doubleheaders (40 ND sweeps, 21 splits).

Inside The Notre Dame Bullpen													
Pitcher	ERA	W-L	Rel. GP	SV	IP	H (Avg., HR)	R/ER	K/BB	WP	HBP	Inher.	R's Sc.	1st Batters
Viloria	0.00	1-0	9	1	11.1	8 (.195, 0)	1/0	9/0	0	0	0-of-5		1-for-8, 4 K
Arminio	0.00	0-0	2	0	2.1	0 (.000, 0)	0/0	1/1	0	0	0		0-for-1
Thornton	1.23	0-0	3	0	7.1	6 (.250, 0)	2/1	1/4	0	2	1-of-3		1-for-1, BB, HB
Gagne	3.08	3-3	14	5	26.1	25 (.248, 2)	14/9	23/9	1	0	0-of-4		3-for-13, 2 K
Jones	3.38	2-0	5	0	8.0	7 (.226, 0)	4/3	11/1	0	0	0		0-for-5, K
Vergara	7.36	0-0	5	0	11.0	11 (.250, 2)	11/9	8/9	2	3	0		0-for-5, 3 K
Kalita	8.10	0-0	1	0	3.1	6 (.545, 0)	3/3	0/3	0	1	0		BB
Laird	8.31	0-0	9	0	8.2	7 (.219, 1)	8/8	13/11	3	1	1-of-1		1-for-7, 4 K, 2 BB
Doherty	8.44	0-0	4	0	5.1	6 (.300, 0)	5/5	9/5	1	1	0-of-1		0-for-3, 2 K, BB
Wilkins	9.00	0-0	3	0	4.0	10 (.500, 1)	6/4	5/1	0	0	0		1-for-3, K
Bickford	18.00	0-0	1	0	2.0	4 (.364, 0)	4/4	2/3	1	0	0		0-for-1, K
Totals	4.62	6-3	55	6	89.1	89 (.263, 6)	58/46	82/47	8	8	2-of-14		7-for-47 (.149) 5 BB, 18 K

HAWAII 0.0 – Senior RHP **Brandon Viloria** (Wailuku, Hawaii) has logged nine solid relief outings in 2003, allowing just an unearned run, eight hits (.195 opp. batting) and no walks, wild pitches or hit batters in 11.1 innings of work ... Viloria also has allowed just 1-of-11 leadoff batters to reach base and teams are hitting just 1-for-13 (.077) vs. him with runners on base.

SECOND-STRIKE WEAPON – Notre Dame's offense has totaled just 11 runs and a .217 team batting average in the first inning this season but the Irish have erupted for 43 runs and .365 team batting in the second inning ... ND has been outscored 15-11 in the first inning but quickly has turned the tables in the second for a 43-4 scoring edge (including a 29-0 second-inning scoring edge in the last eight games) ... here's a look at ND's offense, by inning:

1st	11 runs, .217 batting	2nd	43 runs, .365 batting	3rd	33 runs, .355 batting
4th	25 runs, .263 batting	5th	30 runs, .377 batting	6th	37 runs, .362 batting
7th	14 runs, .274 batting	8th	23 runs, .322 batting	9th	5 runs, .196 batting
Ex. Inn.	2 runs, .282 batting				

Here's a look at the runs allowed, by inning:

1st	15 runs, 4.34 ERA	2nd	4 runs, 1.24 ERA	3rd	23 runs, 4.03 ERA
4th	5 runs, 0.93 ERA	5th	10 runs, 1.86 ERA	6th	21 runs, 4.34 ERA
7th	28 runs, 7.14 ERA	8th	14 runs, 4.30 ERA	9th	2 runs, 0.95 ERA
Ex. Inn.	4 runs, 3.86 ERA				

ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICA CANDIDATES - Several Notre Dame players will be under consideration for Academic All-America honors in 2003, with an unmatched two ND baseball players earning that honor in each of the past three seasons ... top Academic All-America candidates in 2003 include senior RHPs **Brandon Viloria** (3.63, electrical engineering), **J.P. Gagne** (3.35, finance) and **Peter Ogilvie** (3.21, product design), plus junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** (3.26, marketing).

STRONG UP THE MIDDLE - Notre Dame boasts the only pair of middle infielders who each received 2003 preseason All-America honors, with junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** earning a second-team nod from the National College Baseball Writers Association 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 third 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 ... three other second basemen and five shortstops 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 Collegiate Baseball) 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 Louisiana State SS Aaron Hill ... two other shortstops - Richmond's David Reaver and USC's Anthony Lunetta - also received preseason All-America honors.

PROSPECTS-A-PLENTY - Six Irish players also have been listed among national college prospect rankings, as compiled by Baseball America/Perfect Game and Team One Baseball ... the Dec. 15 BA/PG list forecasting the top-100 prospects for the 2004 draft included four ND sophomore RHPs: **Grant Johnson** (5th), **John Axford** (19th), **Chris Niesel** (49th) and **Martin Vergara** (78th) ... no other school had more than three pitchers among that top-100 prospects list (Rice had three, Texas and Old Dominion two) ... Macri (a draft-eligible sophomore) was listed 40th (second among shortstops) on the BA/PG prospects list for the 2003 draft while Sollmann was 124th on that list ... two other sophomores from BIG EAST teams - Boston College RHP Chris Lambert (12th) and Rutgers OF Jeff Frazier (17th) - also are among the top prospects on the BA/PG top-100 prospects list for the 2004 draft ... the BIG EAST is the only conference with four-plus schools represented on that top-100 prospect list while the six total BIG EAST players matches the ACC for the most from one conference among the BA/PG top 100 prospects for the '04 draft.

NIESEL HIGHLY-REGARDED - Sophomore RHP **Chris Niesel** impressively was forecasted by the Major League Scouting Bureau's 2002 fall rankings as the No. 1 overall college prospect for the 2004 draft, followed by Florida State SS Stephen Drew, Ohio State LHP Scott Lewis, Vanderbilt LHP Jeremy Sowers and Clemson LHP Tyler Lumsden ... the Irish saw Lewis and Drew up-close during the 2002 NAAs (posting a pair of wins over both OSU and FSU) and could face Sowers at next week's Kennel Club Classic in Jacksonville (Lumsden and his Clemson teammates joined Niesel and the Irish at the 2002 CWS).

NOTRE DAME BASEBALL 2003 PRESEASON HONORS AND RANKINGS

John Axford (So., RHP) – Nation's #19 college prospect (11th pitcher) for 2004 draft (Baseball America/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 BIG EAST player of the year (BIG EAST coaches and BA), #124 college prospect for 2003 draft (BA Prospects Plus, 12/15/02), preseason all-BIG EAST (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 magazine, NCBWA), preseason all-BIG EAST (coaches, BA), BE's #1 prospect and best control pitcher (BA)

RIGHT STUFF – ND's lineup – predominantly lefthanded the past four seasons – has taken on a decidedly righthanded slant in 2003, following the graduation of four lefthanded starters (CF and leadoff batter **Steve Stanley**, 3B/cleanup/#5 hitter **Andrew Bushey**, C **Paul O'Toole** and DH **Matt Bok**) and the pro signing of junior LF/3-hole hitter **Brian Stavisky** ... those five players were among the teams' top hitters from 2000-02, with Stanley, Bushey and O'Toole also playing in 1999 alongside fellow lefthanded hitters **Jeff Felker** (1B, '97-'00), **Ben Cooke** (IF/OF, '98-'01) and **Jeff Perconte** (IF/OF, '97-'00) ... junior 1B **Joe Thaman** is the only lefthanded hitter among the returning starters, with 2B **Steve Sollmann**, RF **Kris Billmaier** and C **Javi Sanchez** (the '02 SS) all hitting from the right side.

KEY PIECE OF THE PUZZLE – The Irish were 45-11 in 2002 games started by 2B [Steve Sollmann](#), compared to just 5-7 in games when he was out of the starting lineup (due to a quad pull).

ELITE E.R.A. – Notre Dame has finished in the top-16 of the national charts for team ERA in four of the previous five seasons, owning the nation's best team ERA during portions of 2000 and '01 ... the 2000 staff surged atop the national ERA charts in late April (2.72) and finished 16th (3.93) ... the Irish then returned to the top spot among the 2001 team ERA leaders for three weeks in April, finishing fifth at 3.22 (best at ND since '92, third-best since '75) ... ND went on to finish 13th in the 2002 ERA rankings (3.57), joining Texas and Rice as the only teams ranked among the nation's top-20 ERA leaders in 2000, '01 and '02 ... the Irish also finished 12th in the final 1998 team ERA rankings (4.02) while the first eight ND staffs led by pitching coach [Brian O'Connor](#) ('95-'02) averaged a 4.10 team ERA.

TOP TOOLS – *Baseball America* rated several Notre Dame players among its "top tools" list for the 2003 BIG EAST Conference ... ND sophomore RHPs [Chris Niesel](#) ("best breaking ball") and [Grant Johnson](#) ("best control") joined Boston College sophomore RHP Chris Lambert ("best fastball") as the pitchers cited on BA's list for BIG EAST top tools.

CLOSING WITH THE CLOSER – Current senior RHP and 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 2002 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.

SENIOR SAVERS – Notre Dame's senior class includes three righthanders – [J.P. Gagne](#) (11), [Brandon Vilorio](#) (6) and [Matt Laird](#) (5) – who each have totaled five-plus saves in their ND careers ... Laird and his 3/4 delivery produced four saves in the closing role with the 2001 team that climbed to the No. 1 national ranking ... his more noteworthy saves that season included the first of two wins on opening week at Mississippi State (7-5, 0.2 IP) and the final two innings to cap a 3-0 shutout of Cleveland State ... he also went 7-2 in his final nine decisions of the 2002 season.

ND ALUMS EMBARK ON PRO SEASONS – Three former Notre Dame baseball players were on 40-man rosters for MLB Spring Training: IF Craig Counsell (Arizona), RHP Brad Lidge (Houston) and LHP Tim Kalita (Detroit) ... Counsell and Lidge both made the big-league rosters (Kalita is with the double-A Erie Sea Wolves) ... three others were non-roster invitees to Big-League Camp: RHPs [Aaron Heilman](#) (rated by *Baseball America* as the No. 3 prospect in the New York Mets organization; with triple-A Norfolk Tides) and Christian Parker (Yankees; triple-A) and LHP Chris Michalak (Colorado) ... several other former ND players have embarked on their minor-league seasons: catcher [Paul O'Toole](#) (Cubs; Daytona), 3B/C [Andrew Bushey](#) (Colorado), Oakland OFs [Steve Stanley](#) (double-A Midland, Texas) and [Brian Stavisky](#) (single-A Cane County, Ill., Cougars), IF Brant Ust (Detroit; double-A Erie), RHP [Danny Tamayo](#) (Kansas City; double-A) and OF [Matt Bok](#) (Los Angeles).

FAR & WIDE – The Notre Dame list of all-time baseball monogram winners includes players from 43 home states ... current senior RHP [Brandon Vilorio](#) (Wailuku, Hawaii) in 2000 became the program's first letterwinner from the island state while current junior LHP [Cody Wilkins](#) (Hudson, N.C.) could become the first from the Tar Heel state ... the only other states that have not produced ND baseball letterwinners include Alaska, Idaho, Nevada, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Vermont ... the nine-year [Paul Mainieri](#) era has featured players from 34 states/provinces (see p. 33 of media guide), including 19 states represented on the 2003 squad: California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Ontario, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Washington

BOOMERANG SEASON – It was a long and winding road, but the sixth-ranked Notre Dame baseball team ended up in the 2002 College World Series and the NCAA "final six" – ultimately living up to its billing as the nation's No. 5-ranked team in the Baseball America preseason poll (ND was 13th in the USA Today/ESPN preseason coaches poll and 19th in the Collegiate Baseball poll) ... the eight CWS teams all were in the top-14 of the BA preseason poll: Stanford (1), Clemson (2), ND (5), Nebraska (8), Texas (9), Rice (11), Georgia Tech (13) and South Carolina (14) ... others in the BA preseason top 10 included Miami (3), USC (4), Florida State (6), LSU (7) and Tulane (10).

ROAD-TESTED – Current junior C [Javi Sanchez](#) (Miami) was ND's only 2002 starter who hit better on the road (.299, 40-for-134, including neutral-site games) than at Eck Stadium (.263, 25-for-95) ... Sanchez hit four of his five 2002 home runs on the road, including a 2-run blast (after an RBI single) at Third Fifth Ballpark vs. Michigan (a rare HR in the ND-UM series at the minor-league park) and postseason HRs in minor-league parks vs. Rutgers (BIG EAST Tournament, Commerce Bank Ballpark) and vs. Stanford (at the CWS) ... his other top road performances including a key role in the pivotal comeback at West Virginia (10-4, in 10 inn.), with his 2-for-4, 2-RBI, 2-run day including the go-ahead double in the 10th.

J.P. Gagne – 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	4.46	7-1	19/13	0	0	72.2	98	40	36	25	44	0-0-6	.333	4	2
2001	5.35	5-5	17/13	1	0	70.2	79	47	42	21	47	17-2-6	.280	1	5
2002	3.14	9-4	28/7	1	6	94.2	86	40	33	16	69	23-1-7	390/.245	4	12
2003	3.08	3-3	14/0	0	5	26.1	25	14	9	9	23	3-0-2	112/.248	1	0
Totals	4.09	24-13	78/33	2	11	264.1	288	141	120	71	183	43-3-21	.280	10	19

Tyler Jones	W-L	GP/GS	CG	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	2B-3B-HR	BF/B/Avg	WP	HB	
2002	4.00	1-0	4/1	0	1	9.0	9	5	4	9	6	0-0-0	46/.243	1	0
2003	4.50	2-0	5/0	0	0	8.0	7	4	3	1	11	1-0-0	32/.226	0	0
Totals	4.20	3-0	9/1	0	1	17.0	16	9	7	10	17	1-0-0	78/.235	1	0

Matt Laird	W-L	GP/GS	CG	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	2B-3B-HR	BF/B/Avg	WP	HB	
2000	3.83	5-2	15/9	0	0	47.0	55	32	20	15	34	0-0-2	.284	6	9
2001	3.09	5-1	22/0	0	4	32.0	23	11	11	15	28	5-0-1	.209	4	6
2002	5.73	0-0	12/0	0	1	11.0	14	9	7	9	9	0-1-0	58/.292	3	0
2003	8.31	0-0	9/0	0	0	8.2	7	8	8	11	13	1-0-1	45/.219	3	1
Totals	4.20	10-3	58/9	0	5	98.2	99	60	46	50	84	6-1-4	.258	16	16

Brandon Vitoria	W-L	GP/GS	CG	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	2B-3B-HR	BF/B/Avg	WP	HB	
2000	3.18	0-0	11/1	0	0	17.0	19	6	6	1	15	0-0-0	.284	1	1
2001	3.32	3-1	12/0	0	2	21.2	21	10	8	5	8	7-0-1	.241	0	2
2002	2.45	2-1	16/0	0	3	22.0	16	10	6	5	8	0-1-1	88/.203	0	1
2003	0.00	1-0	9/0	0	1	11.1	8	1	0	0	9	3-0-0	41/.195	0	0
Totals	2.50	6-2	48/1	0	6	72.0	64	27	20	11	40	10-1-2	.234	1	4

Kris Billmaier – Career Stats

Yr.	Avg.	GP/GS	AB	R	H	2B-3B-HR	RBI	TB/SLG	BB	HBP	SO	GDP	OB%	SF	SH	SB	E (FLD%)
'00	.354	33/21	82	18	29	3-0-4	19	44/.537	8	1	10	0	.413	1	0	0-2	0 (.000)
'01	.257	56/55	183	34	47	9-0-3	37	65/.355	30	9	15	0	.382	3	2	4-6	2 (.970)
'02	.313	65/62	230	34	72	8-1-3	41	91/.396	14	7	33	4	.369	1	11	2-2	8 (.927)
'03	.316	29/28	114	21	36	8-1-3	22	55/.482	8	3	10	3	.364	4	1	1-1	1.000
Tot.	.302	183/166	609	107	184	28-2-13	119	255/.419	60	20	68	7	.378	9	14	7-11	10 (.955)

M. Edwards	GP/GS	AB	R	H	2B-3B-HR	RBI	TB/SLG	BB	HBP	SO	GDP	OB%	SF	SH	SB	E (FLD%)	
'02	.290	9/8	31	3	9	1-0-0	4	10/.323	3	1	6	1	.371	0	0	1-1	6 (.806)
'03	.375	28/28	104	20	39	9-1-4	33	62/.596	11	3	16	3	.442	2	0	1-4	4 (.967)
Tot.	.356	37/36	135	23	48	10-1-4	37	72/.533	14	4	22	4	.426	2	0	2-5	10 (.934)

Matt Macri	GP/GS	AB	R	H	2B-3B-HR	RBI	TB/SLG	BB	HBP	SO	GDP	OB%	SF	SH	SB	E (FLD%)	
'02	.206	17/16	68	10	14	3-0-1	13	20/.294	7	0	24	0	.273	2	0	1-2	1.000
'03	.276	27/27	98	19	27	7-2-1	14	41/.418	12	2	17	0	.366	0	4	1-2	9 (.927)
Tot.	.247	44/43	166	29	41	10-2-2	27	61/.367	19	2	41	0	.328	2	4	2-4	9 (.933)

J. Sanchez	GP/GS	AB	R	H	2B-3B-HR	RBI	TB/SLG	BB	HBP	SO	GDP	OB%	SF	SH	SB	E (FLD%)	
'01	.000	9/2	13	0	0	0-0-0	0	0/.000	1	0	2	0	.071	0	0	0-0	1 (.750)
'02	.281	66/65	231	50	65	7-3-5	29	93/.403	24	5	32	3	.360	1	8	1-1	28 (.902)
'03	.313	26/26	99	21	31	6-1-1	13	42/.424	11	3	6	1	.395	1	0	2-2	5 (.975)
Tot.	.280	101/93	343	71	96	13-4-6	42	135/.394	36	8	40	4	.360	2	8	3-3	34 (.931)

S. Sollmann	GP/GS	AB	R	H	2B-3B-HR	RBI	TB/SLG	BB	HBP	SO	GDP	OB%	SF	SH	SB	E (FLD%)	
'01	.362	61/61	221	52	80	9-2-5	36	108/.489	30	4	29	0	.440	4	6	23-34	21 (.928)
'02	.362	59/57	213	53	77	8-4-2	47	99/.465	22	3	18	3	.420	5	6	6-6	8 (.969)
'03	.383	29/29	120	34	46	6-3-3	24	67/.558	12	0	9	1	.439	0	3	18-24	4 (.972)
Tot.	.366	149/147	554	139	203	23-9-10	107	274/.495	64	7	56	4	.432	9	15	47-64	33 (.952)

Joe Thaman	GP/GS	AB	R	H	2B-3B-HR	RBI	TB/SLG	BB	HBP	SO	GDP	OB%	SF	SH	SB	E (FLD%)	
'01	.284	61/60	208	29	59	15-1-2	25	82/.394	10	2	31	0	.318	3	3	1-3	6 (.990)
'02	.272	62/58	180	43	49	6-0-6	33	73/.406	24	5	40	3	.370	2	13	2-5	9 (.984)
'03	.185	25/17	65	4	12	3-1-0	13	17/.262	4	1	19	2	.243	0	5	0-0	1 (.995)
Tot.	.265	148/135	453	76	120	24-2-8	70	172/.380	38	8	90	5	.329	5	21	3-8	16 (.988)