

2004 NOTRE DAME BASEBALL

March 6-9, at Alamo City Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, Texas)

The Notre Dame baseball team – **6-0** for the first time since 1960 and ranked as high as **7th** in the national polls (by *Collegiate Baseball* magazine) – continues its season-opening road show by returning to the familiar spot of San Antonio, Texas, where ND will play host to the **Alamo City Irish Baseball Classic** at double-A Wolff Stadium (March 6-9, see schedule below) ... ND's **63 runs** are most by a Notre Dame team at the six-game mark **since** the **1913** squad scored 70 runs in its first six games ... this marks the 8th time in the 10-year Paul Mainieri era that Notre Dame has played in San Antonio ... Notre Dame opened the '04 season at the USC Classic with wins over San Diego State (7-3) and the hosts and #20 Trojans (3-1) before winning last week's Florida Atlantic Classic after wins over #25 Winthrop (19-6), #12 FAU (3-2) and #25 Minnesota (19-7) ... the Irish also won a makeup game last week vs. Florida Memorial, at FAU (12-3; with that game replacing the previous week's rainout vs. Louisville) ... Notre Dame again is playing a split Spring Break schedule, heading midweek to the Austin area to compete in the March 11-14 **Round Rock College Classic** (the '02 College World Series team played a similar schedule, but that team started the break in Round Rock before heading to San Antonio).

ALAMO CITY CLASSIC SCHEDULE AND PROBABLE PITCHING MATCHUPS

Saturday, March 6 (1:30 and 5:30)

Notre Dame – junior RHP Chris **Niesel** (Plantation, FL; 6-0/205)

(career: 2.85, 15-1, 162 Ks/40 BB, 183.1 IP, 165 H; '04: 1.42, 2-0, 13 Ks/3 BB, 12.2 IP, 2 GS, 11 H/.244)

vs. Southern Illinois – junior LHP Eric **Haberer** (Bloomington, IL; 6-2/190)

('04: 4.50, 0-0, 7 Ks/BB, 6 IP, 3 GP/0 GS, 8 H ... '03: 5.08, 1-3, 15 KS/12 BB, 33.2 IP, 39 H)

Texas-San Antonio – junior LHP Aaron **Rodriguez** (Rosenberg, TX; 5-10/230)

(6.16, 1-0, 25 Ks/5 BB, 19 IP, 23 H ... '03: 8.23, 1-2, 19 Ks/21 BB, 27.1 IP, 36 H)

vs. Penn State – senior RHP Jim **Farrell** (Harleysville, PA; 6-3/215)

('04: 5.79, 1-1, 5 Ks/3 BB, 9.1 IP, 2 GS, 13 H ... '03: 3.47, 7-3, 60 Ks)

Sunday, March 7 (1:30 and 5:30)

Notre Dame – sophomore LHP Tom **Thornton** (Middleboro, MA; 6-6/215)

('04: 1.38, 1-0, 11 Ks/2 BB, 13 IP, 2 GS, 10 H/.233; '03: 1.81, 5-1, 29 KS/14 BB, 54.2 IP, 54 H)

vs. Texas-San Antonio – freshman RHP Steven **Vasquez** (Beeville, TX; 6-2/170)

('04: 5.50, 1-1, 20 Ks/7 BB, 18 IP, 19 H)

Penn State – senior RHP Clayton **Hamilton** (Beaver Falls, PA; 6-5/205)

('04: 2.61, 2-0, 12 Ks/4 BB, 10.1 IP, 2 GS, 6 H ... '03: 5.56, 2-3, SV, 45 Ks)

vs. Southern Illinois – senior RHP Josh **Joiner** (Jonesboro, IL; 6-1/180)

('04: 5.06, 0-0, 8 Ks/4 BB, 10.2 IP, 5 GP/0 GS, 8 H ... '03: 5.27, 6-3, 25 Ks/19 BB, 54.2 IP, 67 H)

Monday, March 8 (1:30 and 5:30)

Notre Dame – freshman RHP Derik **Olvey** (Pelham, AL; 6-2/205)

('04: 10.38, 0-0, 1 K/0 BB, 4.1 IP, 1 GS, 7 H ... Pelham HS in '03: 1.49, 9-1, 93 Ks/11 BB, 70.2 IP, 36 H)

vs. Penn State – sophomore RHP Sean **Stidfole** (New Bloomfield, PA; 6-2/185)

('04: 0.00, 0-0, 5 Ks/2 BB, 4.2 IP, 2 GP/0 GS, 2 H ... '03: 2.23, 3-1, SV, 30 Ks)

So. Illinois – jr. LHP Bryan **Rueger** (Mt. Vernon, IN; 6-3/170) ('04: 6.55, 0-2, 7 Ks/7 BB, 11 IP, 3 GS, 18 H ... '03: 3.75, 6-2, 29 Ks)

or senior RHP Marshall **Tucker** (St. Louis, MO; 6-1/220) ('04: 4.26, 0-3, 6 Ks/7 BB, 12.2 IP, 3 GS, 20 H ... '03: 3.38, 3-1, 3 SV, 16 Ks)

vs. Texas-San Antonio – senior RHP Klæe **Boehme** (Lytle, TX; 6-1/200)

('04: 3.86, 2-1, 26 Ks/5 BB, 21 IP, 28 H ... '03: 4.15, 4-1, 2 SV, 33 Ks)

Tuesday, March 9 (noon consolation game; 4:00 p.m. title game)

Fourth-day starters are TBA (SIU likely Rueger or Tucker)

RADIO, LIVE-STATS & HOTLINE – All of Notre Dame's 2004 regular-season and postseason games again will be broadcast by South Bend-based ESPN Radio **1620/1580 AM** (WDND, and its sister station WNDV 1490) ... the South Bend ESPN affiliate is slated to switch from 1620 to 1580 on Sunday, March 7 ... the broadcasts are available via the internet at www.und.com (College Sports Pass subscription required) ... und.com also provides links to GameTracker livestats on the website's main page, for all home games and select road games (including the Alamo City Classic) ... call the ND Sports **Hotline** at **574-631-3000** for schedule and result information for all varsity sports currently in season (from the main menu, select "4" and then select "1" for baseball information).

SUPER TROOPERS – Notre Dame, which is slated to spend just five of 15 weekends at home this season (including a bye weekend), truly has enjoyed its 6-0 start despite the various challenges that come with spending the first month of the season away from home ... the Irish opened the '04 season by playing on both coasts (in Los Angeles and Boca Raton) before heading to Texas for the current Spring Break trip (followed by a pair of games at Southern Illinois, two midweek home games, and the first BIG EAST series at West Virginia) ... Notre Dame's emphasis on student-athlete class attendance (teams can only miss three Tuesday/Thursday classes and three Mon./Wed./Fri. classes, for a total of six class misses per season) poses some unique challenges for several Irish teams, including the baseball program ... the Irish players wrapped up midterm week by attending classes on Friday, then were delayed out of Chicago by heavy winds – with the team arriving in San Antonio at 1:00 a.m. (the players then headed off with their respective host families and were due at Wolff Stadium at 10:00 a.m., with the staff set to arrive at 8:30 a.m. to set up the Irish locker room for the four-day stay) ... the Irish also headed into midterm week following a long day that stretched 21 hours ... after playing a pair of games in Boca Raton on Saturday, Feb. 28, the Irish had a 6:00 a.m. wakeup call on Sunday the 29th and headed back to FAU Stadium for the final game of the weekend, vs. Minnesota at 11:00 a.m. ... the team then flew to Chicago Midway on Sunday night and pulled into campus at 2:00 a.m., with most players and staff reaching their beds at 3:00 a.m. (a full 21 hours after waking up the previous day).

FAR & WIDE – The 11 players listed below as potential starters include three California natives and two each from Florida and Ohio, plus one each from Virginia, Iowa, New York and Colorado.

NOTRE DAME PROBABLE 2004 OPENING-DAY STARTING LINEUP

* indicates lefthander hitter, ** indicates switch hitter

Pos., No., Player	Yr.: Ht./Wt. (Hometown)	Notes
2B #3 STEVE SOLLMANN 2004: .278 (5-18), 2 RBI, 5 R, 5 BB, 1-1 SB, 0 Es 2003: .374, 4 HR, 40 RBI, 38-48 SB, 67 R, 16 2B, 25 BB ND career rec. book: .368 (5th), 68 SB (5th), 260 H (7th), 177 R (10th), also 125 RBI, 11 HR, 33 2B, 82 BB/71 K (186 GP/185 GS)	Sr.; 5-11/195 (Cincinnati, OH)	Rated BIG EAST's best defensive 2B, per BA (prep CF) Preseason 1st Team All-American/BIG EAST Player of the Year '03 All-American/Academic All-American (3.38 GPA, mark. major)
CF #6 DANNY DRESSMAN* 2004: .200 (3-15), 3 RBI, 3 R, BB, SAC (dnp vs. Minn./ankle) Mitty HS ('03): .402, 8 HR, 40 RBI, 15-15 SB, 21 BB	Fr.; 5-9/175 (San Jose, CA)	One of three CA natives in '04 open.-day lineup (Rizzo, Andres) Hit 4-for-11 in '03 Blue-Gold fall intrasquad (5 R, 3 BB, 2 2B) Parents Chuck and Diane (former ND tennis player) are ND grads
1B #14 MATT EDWARDS 2004: .400 (8-20), 8 RBI, 6 R, 3 HR, 2 2B, .950 slug, 3 BB, 0 Es 2003: .376, 8 HR, 69 RBI, 16 2B, 25 BB, 2 3B, 40 R Career: .368, 11 HR, 81 RBI, 19 2B, 31 BB, 2 3B, 49 R (75 GS)	Jr.; 6-2/195 (Mechanicsville, VA)	Game-tying (2-2), go-ahead HRs vs. FAU (3-2), tourney MVP First Mainieri-era player to homer in first AB of season opener '03 honors: 1st team all-BIG EAST, ABCA 2nd team all-region Returned in '03 after broken leg early in '02; prep SS, 3B/1B in '03
C #15 JAVI SANCHEZ 2004: .278 (5-18), 4 RBI, 3 R, HR (vs. FAU), 2B, SAC, 1 E (CI) 2003: .303, HR, 26 RBI, 42 R, 13 2B, 86% inn. caught Career: .283, 138 GP, 7 HR, 59 RBI, 21 2B, 95 R, 45 BB/54 K	Sr.; 6-3/205 (Miami, FL)	Prep 2B who started at SS for '02 CWS team; converted to C in '03 Named to FAU Classic All-Tournament Team '03 BIG EAST Tournament MVP, NCAA Regional all-tourn. pick '04 team tri-captain with Steve Sollmann, Chris Niesel
RF #17 CODY RIZZO 2004: .316 (6-19), 2 RBI, 5 R, 2 HBP, 1-1 SB 2003: .314, 4 HR, 38 RBI, 11 2B, 53 R, 11 BB, 58 GP/56 GS Career: .314, 40 RBI, 58 R, 4 HR, 3B, 11 2B, 11 BB, 36 Ks, 30 HBP, SAC, 2-3 SB	So.; 6-1/200 (Temecula, CA)	Prep soccer/baseball star; hit 8 HRs in 2003 fall ball High school catcher who has developed into stellar defensive OF Set ND record with 28 HBP in '03 (7th in NCAA record book)
DH #36 STEVE ANDRES* 2004: .273 (3-11), 3 RBI, 2 R, HR (vs. Win.), 4 BB, HBP 2003: .269, 43 GP/29 GS, 4 HR, 22 RBI, 19 BB, 2 2B, 2 3B Career: .270, 25 RBI, 31 R, 5 HR, 2 3B, 2 2B, 23 BB/31 Ks, 10 HBP, 2-3 SB	So.; 5-10/190 (Napa, CA)	Academic All-America candidate (3.40 GPA, business) 4th-gen. ND student; grandfather William Andres played for ND Former walk-on who sparked ND in '03 opening week
or #12 MATT BRANSFIELD 2004: .250 (3-12), 2 RBI, R, BB 2003: .310, 0 HR, 10 RBI (71 AB), 3 2B, 3 BB Career: .301, 12 RBI, 14 R, 3 2B, 4 BB, 22 Ks, SAC	So.; 6-1/200 (Englewood, CO)	Academic All-America candidate (3.34 GPA, Coll. Arts & Letters) '03 Blue-Gold fall intrasquad: 4-for-7, 3 BB, 2 HBP, 6 RBI, 2 2B Hit .383 with 12 HR in summer '03 with wood-bat Colorado Sox One of several top prep QBs on '04 tm (also Macri, Andres, Dury)
3B #5 MATT MACRI 2004: .375 (9-24), 8 RBI, 8 R, HR (vs. MN), 3B, 2B, 3 BB, SB, 0 E 2003: .294, 4 HR, 35 RBI, 15 2B, 5 3B, 26 BB, 41 R, 6-9 SB Career: .281, 83 GP/82 GS, 6 HR, 56 RBI, 19 2B, 6 3B	Jr.; 6-2/190 (Clive, IA)	FAU Classic All-Tour. Team; starting SS in '03 (3B summer '03) Rated nation's #41 prospect among juniors, per BA (4th IF) Returned in '03 after early-season elbow injury in '02 Summer '03: 7 HR (Cape Cod League, Brewster Whitecaps)
SS #4 GREG LOPEZ 2004: .409 (9-22), 10 RBI, 6 R, HR, 2 2B, BB, 2 HBP, 1-1 SB, E Career: .273, 36 RBI, 23 R, HR, 3 2B, 5 BB, 27 K, 6 HBP, 8 SAC, 2-6 SB	So.; 6-0/185 (Upper Arlington, OH)	FAU Classic All-Tour. Team; 4-for-6, 6 RBI, HR vs. Winthrop (19-6) 2003: .250, 0 HR, 26 RBI, 2B, 4 BB, 50 GP/40 GS (most @3B)
LF #13 BRENNAN GROGAN* 2004: .467 (7-15), 5 RBI, 5 R, HR, 2B, BB, 1-1 SB, SAC 2003: .299, 0 HR, 25 RBI, 15-21 SB, 3 2B, 5 3B (56 GP/50 GS) Career: .312, 30 RBI, 48 R, HR, 5 3B, 4 2B, 18 BB, 14 Ks, 2 HBP, 13 SAC, 16-22 SB	So.; 6-2/175 (Tequesta, FL)	One of ND's 13 FL natives in Mainieri era (4 on '04 team) vs. Minnesota (19-7): 4-for-5, 2 RBI, 2 R, SB
or #9 CRAIG COOPER 2003: .303, 0 HR, 15 RBI, 10-13 SB, 6 2B, 2 3B (46 GP/31 GS) Career: .304, 19 RBI, 25 R, 2 3B, 7 2B, 18 BB, 26 Ks, 4 HBP, 3 SAC, 11-16 SB	So.; 6-2/205 (Plainview, NY)	2004: .313 (5-for-16), 4 RBI, 3 R, 2B, 3 BB, 1-3 SB, SAC Summer '03 (Hays Larks): .337, 24 SB, 38 RBI, 5 HR, 5 3B
OFF THE BENCH		
1B #44 MIKE DURY** 2004: .250 (1-4), 2 R, 2 HBP	Fr.; 6-5/225 (Indianapolis, IN)	'03 Chatard HS: .420, 10 HR, 37 RBI
2B #8 CHRIS FOURNIER 2004: .200 (1-5), 5 R, 2 BB, 2 HBP	Fr.; 5-11/200 (Fairfield, CT)	'03 Fairfield HS: .671, 3 HR, 42 RBI, 20 2B, 30 BB
C #11 SEAN GASTON* 2004: .833 (10-12), 6 RBI, 7 R, 3 2B, 1.083 slug, 2-2 SB	Fr.; 6-0/170 (Brownsburg, IN)	'03 Brownsburg HS: .478, 8 HR, 35 R, 8 3B Nat'l Hitter of Week (NCBWA); BIG EAST Player of Week
1B #35 CHRIS VASAMI 2004: 1 GP	Fr.; 6-3/250 (Mamaroneck, NY)	'03 Mamaroneck HS: .540, 8 HR, 30 RBI, 13 2B, 27 BB
IF #7 ZACH SISKO*	Sr.; 6-2/205 (Belleville, IL)	Career: .320, 23 GP/2 GS, 5 RBI, 3 R, 2 2B, 4 BB, 2 SAC
C #25 NICK MAINIERI	So.; 5-11/160 (South Bend, IN)	2004: 0-for-2, R, BB, 2 GP; starting QB at St. Joseph's HS

NOTRE DAME PROBABLE STARTING ROTATION (TBA for Day 4 of Alamo City Classic)

vs. *Southern Illinois* (3/6; 1:30 p.m.)

RHP #10 CHRIS NIESEL Jr.; 6-0/205 (Plantation, FL)
2004: 1.42, 2-0, 12.2 IP, 13 Ks/3 BB, 11 H/.244
2003: 2.65, 9-1, 15 GS, 3 CG, 98.1 IP, 87 Ks/19 BB, 86 H/.232

His career K-to-walk ratio (4.08) is on pace for ND record
Car.: 2.85 (9th ND his.), 15-1, 183.1 IP, 163 Ks/40 BB, 165 H/.236
Last 15 GP: 11-0

vs. *Texas-San Antonio* (3/7, 1:30 p.m.)

LHP #30 TOM THORNTON So.; 6-6/215 (Middleboro, MA)
2004: 1.38, 1-0, 2 GS, 13 IP, 11 Ks/2 BB, 10 H/.233
2003: 1.81, 5-1, 15 GP/8 GS, 54.2 IP, 29 Ks/14 BB, 54 H/.269
Career: 1.73, 6-1, 17 GP/10 GS, 67.2 IP, 40 Ks, 16 BB, 64 H/.262, 3 WP, 8 HB

Served primarily as midweek starter in 2003
BIG EAST Pitcher of Week: 6 IP, UER, 4 Ks/2 BB, 4 H (@USC)
Has not allowed a home run in ND career (0 3B, 17 2B)

vs. *Penn State* (3/8, 1:30 p.m.)

RHP #20 DERIK OLVEY Fr.; 6-2/205 (Pelham, AL)
2003 at Pelham HS: 1.49, 9-1, 70.2 IP, 93 Ks/11 BB, 36 H

No-dec. vs. Minn. (19-7): 4.1 IP, 5 R, 7 H, K
'03 High School All-American; rated nation's #22 fr. prospect (BA)

THE BULLPEN

RHP #22 GRANT JOHNSON Jr.; 6-5/215 (Burr Ridge, IL)
2004: 0.00, 1 GP, 2 IP, 2 Ks, BB, 2 H/.250 (vs. SDSU)
2002: 3.46, 9-5, 18 GP/14 GS, 101.1 IP, 86 K/44 BB, 94 H
Career: 3.40, 9-5, 19 GP/14 GS, 103.1 IP, 88 K/45 BB, 96 H/.249 (5 HR), 5 WP, 9 HB

Missed '03 with shoulder injury; dnp at FAU (tonsillitis)
Tossed 1-hitter vs. South Alabama in 2002 NCAAs
'02 Freshman All-American and member of U.S. National Team

LHP #21 JOE THAMAN Sr.; 6-4/210 (St. Louis, MO)
2004: 6.75, 0-0, 3 GP, 1.1 IP, 2 Ks, BB, 1 H/.200 (HR), WP

Stellar defensive 1B who started for Irish in '01-'03 seasons
As senior at St. Louis Univ. HS ('00): 3.23, 7-1, 57 Ks/25 BB, 45 IP

RHP #47 RYAN DOHERTY So.; 7-1/220 (Toms River, NJ)
2004: 0.00, 1-0, SV, 2 GP, 2.1 IP, 3 Ks, 2 BB, HB, 1 H/.143
2003: 2.20, 2-0, SV, 28.2 IP, 44 K/11 BB, 21 H, .220
Career: 2.03, 3-0, 2 SV, 18 GP/1 GS, 31 IP, 47 Ks, 13 BB, 22 H/.196 (HR), 2 WP, 4 HBP

23-inning stretch without allowing earned run in '03 (14 GP)
Save at USC (3-1; IP, BB, 2 Ks), win at FAU (3-2; 1.1 IP, H, BB, K)
Sum. '03 (Del. OH Cows): 0.46, 3 SV, 28 K/5 BB, 10 H, 19.2 IP

RHP #38 TYLER JONES Jr.; 6-4/205 (Arlington, TX)
2004: 0.00, 2 GP (vs. SDSU, FAU), 1.1 IP, K
2003: 6.11, 2-1, 12 GP/1 GS, 17.2 IP, 15 Ks/2 BB, 22 H

Has converted to sidearm delivery for 2004 season
Drafted by Atlanta Braves in 2001 (30th round)
Car.: 5.14, 3-1, SV, 18 GP, 28 IP, 22 K/11 BB, 31 H/.267, 2 WP, 2 HB

RHP #37 DAN KAPALA Fr.; 6-5/210 (Royal Oak, MI)
2004: 2.25, 1-0, 2 GP, 4 IP, 5 Ks, 3 H/.200 (HR)

'03 Shrine Catholic HS: 1.05, 11-4, 193 K/79 BB, 27 H
Winner vs. Minnesota (19-7): 3 IP, R, H, 4 Ks

RHP #45 JEFF SAMARDZIJA Fr.; 6-5/205 (Valparaiso, IN)
2004: 2 IP vs. Florida Memorial (2 Ks)

'03 Valparaiso HS: 3.28, 6-3, 50 K/27 BB
Lettered as WR with ND football team ('03)

LHP #33 SCOTT BICKFORD Jr.; 6-5/170 (Owings, MD)
Career: 6.57, 1-0, SV, 12.1 IP, 14 K/4 BB, 14 H

2003: 1 GP, 2 IP, 4 R, 3 BB, 2 K

RHP #35 CHRIS VASAMI Fr.; 6-3/250 (Mamaroneck, NY)
2004: 1 IP vs. Florida Memorial (4.50, 2 IP, 2 Ks, 2 H/.286, HR, HB)

'03 Mamaroneck HS: 0.67, 10-1, 120 Ks/20 BB, 34 H, 62 IP

LHP #44 MIKE DURY Fr.; 6-5/225 (Indianapolis, IN)
2004: 1 IP vs. Minnesota (K, 2 H/.400, WP)

'03 Chatard HS: .420, 10 HR, 37 RBI

QUICK NOTES ON THE ALAMO CITY IRISH BASEBALL CLASSIC FIELD

• **Southern Illinois** (see www.siusalukis.com) – SIU has opened 0-9, after games at Florida Atlantic (2-14, 0-7, 2-7), at Vanderbilt (6-12, 8-10, 0-15) and a home series vs. Northern Illinois (1-5, 3-7, 5-6) ... the Salukis are batting just .203 as a team (outscored 83-27), with 5 home runs, 17 walks, 74 strikeouts and 4-of-6 stolen bases ... the SIU staff owns a 6.48 team ERA (50 Ks, 47 BB, 99 H/.311 in 75 IP) while the .928 team fielding pct. includes 26 errors and 7 double plays ... sophomore 1B **Nathan Emrick** is batting .297 (2 RBI, 4 R, 2 2B, 3 SB), with no other regular hitting above .270 ... SIU returned 17 of 30 letterwinners from its 2003 team that went 30-25 and finished 3rd in the Missouri Valley Conference (then 302 at the MVC Tournament) ... top returning hitters included senior 2B Greg Andrews (.302, 8 HR, 36 RBI) and Emrick (.324, HR, 21 RBI).

• **Texas-San Antonio** (see www.goutsas.com) – UTSA is 6-4 after playing at New Mexico State (12-13, 9-7, 15-5) and Baylor (1-6), plus games at Wolff Stadium vs. Army (6-5 in 11, 4-0, 3-6) and George Washington (5-3, 5-9, 5-3) ... the Roadrunners enter the weekend batting .278 with a 66-58 scoring edge, 12 home runs, 42 walks, 7 9strikeouts and 21-of-23 stolen bases ... the UTSA defense owns a .972 fielding pct. (10 Es, 8 DP) while the staff holds a 5.22 ERA (87 Ks, 29 BB, 98 H/.280 in 88 IP) ... top '04 hitters include senior OF Sam Mitchell (.393, 10 RBI, 6 R, 2 HR, 4 SB) and junior OF/CChris Lewis (.333, 6 RBI, 3 HR, 6 BB) ... UTSA returned 14 of 25 letterwinners from its '03 team that went 29-27 and finished 6th in the Southland Conference ... top returning hitters included sophomore SS Ryan Crew (.313, 5 HR, 34 RBI) and 2B Aaron Stemper (.258, HR, 19 RBI).

• **Penn State** (see www.gopsusports.com) – PSU enter the weekend 3-1, after a split at Virginia (1-7, 8-3) and wins at Norfolk State (10-1, 12-2) ... PSU is batting .297 with a 31-13 scoring edge (0 HRs), 24 walks and 24 stikeouts ... the PSU staff owns a 3.09 team ERA (36 Ks, 11 BB, 32 H in 35 IP) while the team fielding pct. is .980 (3 Es, 5 DPs) ... top hitters: senior C Matt Harter (.462, 6-for-13, 2 RBI, 2B, 4 BB), freshman OF Travis Laird (.400, 6-for-15, 3 RBI) and junior 1B Clint Eury (.353, 6-for-17, 4 RBI, 2B, 2 BB) ... PSU returned 19 of 26 letterwinners from its 2003 team that went 29-28 and finished 3rd in both the Big Ten regular season and tournament ... top returning hitters included Harter (.290, 7 HR, 34 RBI), sophomore OF Derrick Barr (.312, 39 RBI) and Eury (.301, 4 HR, 19 RB).

TOURNEY TERRORS – Since opening 0-2 at the 2003 Minnesota DQ Classic (ND's only 0-2 start in the last 21 regular-season-tournaments), the Irish have gone 12-1 in their last 13 games at regular-season tournaments ... that run includes a win over Wake Forest to close the DQ Classic, a 6-1 showing at the '03 Kennel Clubs Classic (in Jacksonville, Fla.) and the unbeaten '04 efforts at the USC (2-0) and FAU (3-0) Classics ... the only loss in that stretch came in extra innings, vs. homestanding Jacksonville.

A QUICK LOOK AT THE IRISH (also see recap notes from USC and FAU Classics later in release) – Notre Dame owns the nation's **No. 6-rated freshman class** (per *Baseball America*) while **returning** the bulk of its offense (each of **top nine hitters, eight of nine position starters**) and several top pitchers from the 2003 squad that **repeated as BIG EAST Tournament champions** (first team to do so since 1986), fashioned a **45-18** record and advanced to the **final of the NCAA Fullerton Regional** ... the pitching staff also is set to welcome back **Grant Johnson** (missed all of '03 due to shoulder injury) but his fellow junior RHP John Axford will miss the '04 campaign after undergoing "Tommy John" reconstructive elbow surgery ... the 14 returning position players combined to make 89% of the offensive starts in '03 while combining for 99% of the stolen bases (83 of 84), 96% of the triples (25 of 26), 90% of the hits (597 of 664) and runs scored (391 of 433), 87% of the walks (178 of 204), and 84% of the home runs (26 of 31) and doubles (97 of 115) ... the 2004 staff's eight returning healthy pitchers (including Johnson, with his '02 stats) combined for a 3.23 ERA and 28-8 record in their previous season with the Irish, with their other combined stats from the past season including two saves, 290 strikeouts, 115 walks and 318 hits allowed in 334 innings ... ND closed 2003 by batting a combined .353 (103-for-292) in eight 2003 postseason games (followed by the current .352 average after six games in '04).

SERIES NOTES

• **ND-SIU (5-3)** – Despite the proximity of the schools, Notre Dame and Southern Illinois have met just eight times previously and never on a campus field ... SIU beat ND twice in the 1970 NCAAAs (10-2, 1-0, at Ohio State) but the Irish have won five of the last six, including four games in San Antonio (6-2 in '96, 4-3 in '98, 5-3 and 3-2 in '02) and two at the University of New Orleans (15-5, 2-6).

• **ND-UTSA (1-1)** – These teams first met at San Antonio's Wolff Stadium in 1995 (a 7-3 win for UTSA) and in 2001, across town at St. Mary's Keefe Field (an 8-3 ND win).

• **ND-PSU (6-3)** – Notre Dame won its first three games ever vs. Penn State (9-0 at home in 1909, then 6-1 at PSU in '12 and 5-3 in '13) ... PSU beat ND in the 1957 College World Series (5-4) ... the teams split a pair of games at San Antonio's Wolff Stadium in 1997 (9-2 PSU, 9-8 ND) before playing three times in 1999 (PSU won 6-5 at St. Mary's, with the Irish winning 3-1 and 6-3 at Wolff Stadium).

ALL-TIME OPPONENTS LIST REACHE 281 – Notre Dame has faced 281 different opponents in 112 seasons of Division I baseball, with Winthrop and Florida Memorial joining that list last week ... another upcoming opponent, Texas Tech, is among the more noteworthy teams not on ND's all-time opponent list (as is Oklahoma State) ... the Irish are **15-2 in their last 17 games vs. first-time opponents** (including '04 wins over San Diego State, Winthrop and FMC), dating back to a win over Akron in 2000 ... recent losses to first-time opponents have been to South Florida ('01) and Jacksonville ('03), with other recent wins over first-time opponents Florida Atlantic ('00), New Mexico, Pacific, Sam Houston State and UC Santa Barbara (all in 2001), Fairfield, Sacred Heart, Arkansas-Little Rock, Rochester College and Rice (all in '02) and '03 opponents Newman and IPFW during that stretch.

MANSHIP RETURNS HOME – Notre Dame freshman RHP **Jeff Manship** – who recently underwent season-ending Tommy John reconstructive elbow surgery – is a San Antonio native and earned All-America honors as a junior and senior at Reagan High School (his combined '02 and '03 stats included a 0.65 ERA, 22-2 record and a 7-9 K-to-walk ratio (192 Ks, 37 BB)).

FRIEND OR FOE? – Notre Dame junior RHP **Tyler Jones** (Arlington, Texas) and Texas-San Antonio's **Robbie Jones** were teammates at James Martin H.S. ... UTSA outfielder **Dan Mitchell** played alongside ND junior RHP **Martin Vergara** with the Sanford Mainers in the summer of '03 ... UTSA pitcher **Steven Vasquez** and ND freshman pitcher **Jeff Manship** also are former teammates.

ND IN TEXAS RESULTS – Notre Dame has made 17 trips to Texas in the previous 26 seasons (see p. 97 of media guide for full list), with a 65-46 all-time record in Texas during those games (.586) ... the Irish posted a 30-15 combined record (.667) in seven previous Texas swings during the Mainieri era, with all of those games in San Antonio except for the 2002 Round Rock Classic (1-3) ...

IRISH BASEBALL CLASSIC HISTORY – This marks the eighth tournament that Notre Dame has hosted in San Antonio, with the Irish owning a 21-3 record in the seven previous events (12-0 spanning the '99, '01 and '02 tournaments) ... Notre Dame won the event in 1996 (10-6 vs. Oral Roberts in championship game), 1999 (15-3 vs. Creighton), 2001 (3-0 round-robin) and 2003 (3-2 vs. Southern Illinois) ... the 2001 event (called the Alamo Invitational) was played at St. Mary's ... ND lost to Baylor in the 1995 Irish Baseball Classic title game (4-10) and to Creighton in '97 (5-8), with the 1998 game rained out (except for one game, a 4-3 win for ND over SIU) ... ND's Irish Baseball Classic tournament MVPs have included OF Rowan Richards ('96), RHP Aaron Heilman ('99) and LF Brian Stavisky ('02).

TEXAS NATIVES – The 2004 Notre Dame baseball roster includes players from 19 states, with two from Texas: junior RHP **Tyler Jones** (Arlington/Martin HS) and freshman RHP **Jeff Manship** (San Antonio/Reagan HS) ... 13 other former players join Jones among the program's 816 all-time monogram winners (from 43 different states) ... two of the program's first all-time monogram winners were Texas natives: LF **Joseph Combe** (Brownsville; 1892) and 1B **Angus McDonald** (Houston; 1897-1900) ... brothers Samuel (SS; '13) and Harry (3B; '13-'14) **Newning** then made the journey to Notre Dame from their native Houston ... other early ND baseball players who hailed from Texas include C/OF **William Allison** (Georgetown, '17) and pitcher **George Murphy** (Oaklawn; '16-'17), who tossed a no-hitter vs. St. Viator in 1917 ... just two Texans lettered with ND baseball in the 72-year stretch from 1918-1989: RHP **Leo Linbeck** (Houston/St. Thomas HS; '54) and LH and P **John Ebert** (Dallas/Marion OH Catholic HS; '82) ... three early-90s players were Texas natives: C **Matt Krall** (Bedford/Trinity HS; '90-'91), OF **Dan Bautch** (Houston/Stanford HS; '90-'92; 68 career SB) and OF **Edwin Hartwell** (Forth Worth/Country Day HS; '90-'93; .354 career hitter, 18 HR, 100 RBI) ... the program's most recent players from Texas include LHP **Pat Davis** (San Antonio/Texas Military Inst.; '96, '98) and RHP **Matt Laird** (Bellaire HS; '00-'03) ... Davis – whose father Ben serves as tournament coordinator for the Alamo City Irish Baseball Classic – now serves as the baseball coach and athletic director at TMI.

GASTON NAMED NATIONAL HITTER OF THE WEEK – Notre Dame freshman catcher Sean Gaston (Brownsburg, Ind.) was named the national co-hitter of the week, as selected by the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association ... Gaston – who also was the second Notre Dame freshman position player ever named BIG EAST player of the week (OF Brian Stavisky was the first in 2000) – shared the award with Stanford sophomore infielder Jed Lowrie ... Gaston opened his college career last weekend in Boca Raton, Fla., by batting 10-for-11 before flying out for a 10-for-12 weekend (.833), plus six RBI, seven runs scored, three doubles, a 1.083 slugging pct. and two stolen bases ... he played a lead role in the game that clinched the Florida Atlantic Classic title, batting 5-for-6 in the 19-7 win over #25 Minnesota (3 RBI, 3 R, 2 2B, SB) ... the third ND freshman ever to collect five-plus hits in a game (and first since CF Scott Sollmann went 5-for-6 at Purdue in 1994, with Joe Binkiewicz going 5-for-5 vs. Dayton in '89), Gaston helped spark several big innings vs. the Gophers by batting 3-for-3 with two outs (including a pair of 2-out RBI) ... the 6-0, 170-pound lefthander hit 4-for-5 earlier in the weekend vs. Florida Memorial (that 12-3 game was not part of the FAU Classic), marking the first game with four-plus hits in his competitive baseball career ... Gaston does not currently meet the at-bat minimums (2.5 AB per team game) for certain BIG EAST statistical categories (such as batting avg. and slugging and on-base pct.) but he does rank 5th among the league's players in stolen bases (2), 8th in doubles (3) and 9th in runs scored (7).

ND's NATIONAL PLAYER-OF-THE-WEEK HISTORY – Four recent Notre Dame players have received national weekly honors ... RHP **Aaron Heilman** was named the *Collegiate Baseball* magazine national pitcher of the week twice during his junior season in 2000, after posting a 12-strikeout game in a 6-4 win over Georgia (March 9, at the Minnesota Metrodome) and an 18-K game in a 3-1, 10-inning win at West Virginia (April 15) ... then-sophomore rightfielder **Brian Stavisky** opened the 2001 season by batting .692 (9-for-13) and reaching base 10 consecutive times at the Mississippi State Classic, earning the weekly hitter honor from the NCBWA and CB's national player-of-the-week award ... the 25-1 win over South Alabama in the 2002 NAAs resulted in current senior second baseman **Steve Sollmann** (6-for-7, 7 RBI, 6 R, HR, 2 3B) and current junior RHP **Grant Johnson** (1-hitter, 8 Ks, BB, HBP, 30 BF) earning the respective player/hitter and pitcher-of-the-week awards from the NCBWA and CB.

BIG EAST PLAYER-OF-THE-WEEK HISTORY – Sean Gaston became one of 17 Notre Dame players who have combined to earn 28 BIG EAST player-of-the-week honors, since ND joined the BIG EAST in 1995-96 (the Irish total is more than double that of any other school in the last nine seasons, with Rutgers earning 13) ... OF Brian Stavisky is the program's only previous freshman position player to earn the BIG EAST weekly award, doing so as the team's rightfielder on April 24, 2000 (see list of previous winners below) ... Gaston also is the sixth ND catcher ever to receive the weekly BIG EAST honor, joining the 1997 tandem of Mike Amrhein and Jeff Wagner, Mike Knecht ('98), Paul O'Toole ('00, '02) and Andrew Bushey ('02) in that distinction ... ND's previous BIG EAST player-of-the-week recipients include a trio of three-time honorees – RF Brian Stavisky (4/24/00, 2/19/01, 4/2/01), SS Alec Porzel (5/0/00, 4/15/01, 5/7/01) and current senior 2B Steve Sollmann (2/24, 3/17 and 5/19 in '03) – plus five two-time recipients in '97 sophomore C Wagner (4/7, 5/5), IF Brant Ust (4/3/98, 3/29/99), '99 junior 1B Jeff Felker (4/15, 5/12), O'Toole (5/13/00, 4/1/02) and '01 junior CF Steve Stanley (2/26, 4/23) ... the other eight ND position players who have received weekly BIG EAST honors include Amrhein (3/17/97), OF Allen Greene (4/28/97), SS J.J. Brock (3/16/98), Knecht (5/4/98), 3B/C Bushey (2/25/02) and three current players: 1B Joe Thaman (5/13/02), 3B/1B Matt Edwards (4/7/03) and SS Matt Macri (4/21/03).

BIG EAST STAT LEADERS – Several Notre Dame players are among the early BIG EAST Conference 2004 statistical leaders:

* Notre Dame is the runaway leader in the early BIG EAST statistical rankings, currently checking in first with: a .352 team batting average (Rutgers is second at .311), a .439 on-base pct. (RU, .415), a .526 slugging pct. (Pittsburgh, at .472), 10.5 runs per game (Seton Hall, 9.5), 8 home runs (Georgetown also has 8, in 11 games), a 3.29 staff ERA (GU, 3.51), just 2.08 walks per 9 innings (Pittsburgh, 3.81) and a .987 fielding pct. (Pitt., .982).

* The Irish also rank second among BIG EAST teams with a .249 opponent batting avg. (behind Boston College's .228), third with 8 stolen bases (behind GU's 13 and 9 for St. John's) and 6 double plays turned (behind Villanova's 10 and RU's 8) and fourth with 8.5 strikeouts thrown per nine innings (behind BC's 10.3, Pitt's 9.00 and West Virginia's 8.9).

* Junior 1B **Matt Edwards** (1st with 3 home runs and .950 slugging pct., 6th with 19 total bases, 7th with 8 RBI, 10th with .500 on-base pct. and 11th with 6 runs)

* Junior 3B **Matt Macri** (6th with 8 runs, 7th with 8 RBI)

* Sophomore SS **Greg Lopez** (1st with 10 RBI, 9th with .409 batting avg., 11th with 6 runs)

* Freshman C **Sean Gaston** (5th with 2 SB, 8th with 3 2B, 9th with 7 R; does not meet min. AB for batting, slugging, etc.)

* Sophomore OF **Brennan Grogan** (6th with .467 batting/7-for-15), 7th with .733 slugging pct., 10th with .500 on-base pct.)

* Senior 2B **Steve Sollmann** (10th with 5 BB)

* Junior RHP **Chris Niesel** (1st with 2 2ins, 2nd with 14 Ks, 9th with 1.42 ERA)

* Sophomore LHP Tom Thornton (7th with 1.38 ERA)

SIZZLING 6-0 – Notre Dame's 6-0 start includes a 63-20 scoring edge and steady plate discipline with only 10 more strikeouts (35) than walks (25), plus a combined hit and walk total (100) that is four times the ND offense's K total and 13 more runs than runners left on base (50) ... ND also is averaging 11.8 runs for every nine offensive innings (63 runs in 48 innings) ... the Irish already have faced four ranked opponents – USC, Winthrop, FAU and Minnesota – but have managed to remain unbeaten, in contrast to a 2-4 start in 2003 that included four games vs. top teams (two games at Arizona State, plus games vs. Nebraska and Minnesota at the Metrodome Classic) ... the comparative six-game team statistics from ND's 2003 and '04 seasons match the team's boost in early-season wins ... the current Irish squad is hitting 43 points higher than the '03 squad at the six-game mark, with a 59-point jump in slugging pct., a 77-point rise in on-base pct., 14 more walks and nine fewer Ks for the ND offense, three more stolen bases and two more home runs ... the '04 staff ERA is nearly one-third of the '03 team's six-game ERA (9.00) to go along with an opp. batting avg. that is nearly 100 points lower (.347 in '03), seven fewer hits and 25 fewer walks allowed and 30 more Ks thrown ... the team fielding pct. is 27 points higher than in '03 after six games (.960), with one-third the number of errors (9 in '03).

EDWARDS LEADS FAU CLASSIC ALL-TOURNAMENT PICKS – Notre Dame junior 1B **Matt Edwards** (Mechanicsville, Va.) was named MVP of the Florida Atlantic Classic, with five other Irish players – senior catcher/DH **Javi Sanchez** (Miami, Fla.), junior third baseman **Matt Macri** (Clive, Iowa), sophomore shortstop **Greg Lopez** (Upper Arlington, Ohio), junior righthander **Chris Niesel** (Plantation, Fla.) and sophomore lefthander **Tom Thornton** (Middleboro, Mass.) – joining Edwards on the 11-player FAU Classic All-Tournament team ... here's a look at the all-tournament performances:

* **Edwards** hit 5-for-12 in the FAU Classic, with 4 RBI and 5 runs scored ... the Irish 3-hole hitter helped knock off #25 Winthrop (19-6) by batting 3-for-4 with a walk and double (2 RBI, 2 R) before stroking the game-tying and go-ahead home runs in the 3-2 thriller vs. #12 FAU (the solo shots came in the 7th and 9th innings) ... the 6-2, 195-pound righthander also walked, reached on a hit-by-pitch and scored a run in the win over Minnesota while playing error-free in 20 fielding chances during the tournament (including the start of the 3-6-5-2 sequence that produced the final two outs of the FAU game).

* **Sanchez** also hit 5-for-12 at the FAU Classic in the return to his home state (4 RBI, 3 R) ... the cleanup batter played a key role in the win over Winthrop (3-for-5, 2 RBI, 2 R, 2B) before launching a solo shot over the rightfield wall to force an early 1-1 tie with FAU (six of his seven home runs with the Irish now have come away from home) ... the 6-3, 205-pound righthander also slapped the final tag in the game-ending sequence vs. FAU and closed the weekend with a single and sacrifice fly in the win over Minnesota.

* **Macri** added a 5-for-13 tournament (7 RBI, 7 R), with an RBI single, two walks and two runs scored in the win over Winthrop ... the 6-2, 190-pound righthander ended the FAU Classic with career-best game vs. Minnesota, batting 4-for-6 with 6 RBI and 5 runs scored ... his two-run, opposite-field blast over the fence in right-center forged an early 2-2 tie vs. the Gophers and the Irish 7-hole hitter added a bases-clearing triple in the 8th. Macri – whose six error-free fielding plays included the rundown for the final out vs. FAU – posted a career-high in hits vs. Minnesota while coming one shy of tying ND records for RBI and runs in a game ... he is one of eight Notre Dame players known to have scored five-plus runs in a game and just the third in the ND record book to do so since 1901 (Pat Pesavento had 5 runs vs. Penn in '89, Brant Ust scored 5 vs. at Seton Hall in '98 and Steve Sollmann tied a 102-year-old ND record by scoring 6 times vs. South Alabama in the 2002 NCAA South Bend Regional).

* **Lopez** joined the above players with five hits at the FAU Classic (in 14 at-bats), adding a team-best eight RBI and a pair of runs scored ... he sparked the Irish to the opening win over Winthrop (4-for-6, 6 RBI, 2 R), with three 2-run hits on the first home run of his ND career, a single and a late-game double from his 8-spot in the lineup ... the 6-0, 185-pound righthander added a sacrifice fly and RBI single in the win over Minnesota and made just one error on 19 fielding chances in the tournament (including the heads-up pivot play that produced the final two outs of the FAU game).

* **Niesel** filled his typical role by getting the Irish off to a win in the first game of the weekend, allowing just one run in eight innings versus Winthrop. He scattered eight hits and two walks while striking out five Eagles batters ... the 6-0, 205-pound righthander posted his 11th consecutive winning decision and pushed his career record with the Irish to 15-1 ... he held Winthrop's lefthanded batters without a hit (0-for-8) and proved tough with runners on base, limiting the Eagles to just 2-for-12 with runners aboard.

* **Thornton** followed with an impressive outing versus the 12th-ranked FAU, matching the Owls' All-American lefthander Randy Beam by allowing just two runs ... the 6-6, 215-pound lefthander - who was named BIG EAST pitcher of the week after a win at #20 USC in the opening week of the season - kept the hosts off balance throughout his outing, allowing just six hits and no walks (plus two hit batters) while posting a career-best seven strikeouts and seven groundouts ... Thornton dominated the FAU righthanded hitters (they hit just 3-for-14, or .214) and added some impressive situational pitching, with just 1-of-7 leadoff batters reaching base while FAU hit just 2-for-10 vs. Thornton with runners on base and 0-for-6 with two outs.

SIX-PACK – Six Notre Dame players – **Matt Edwards, Greg Lopez, Javi Sanchez, Brennan Grogan, Steve Andres** and **Matt Macri** – already have hit home runs, just six games into the 2004 season ... it took 11 games in the 2003 season before six different ND players had homered (Kris Billmaier, Andres, Cody Rizzo, Macri, Edwards and Sanchez) ... Lopez and Grogan delivered second-week HRs, after neither left the yard in 2003.

DEFENSIVE WIZARDRY – Notre Dame posted yet another error-free effort in last week's 3-2 win at FAU, with the Irish infield turning an impressive sequence to end the game ... Doherty entered the 9th looking to quickly close the win but 5-hole hitter Tim Mascia led off by sending an 0-1 pitch up the middle ... sophomore SS Greg Lopez narrowly missed the ball after diving to his left and FAU then gambled by sending pinch-runner Mike McBryde on a 1-1 count ... the Owls could have bunted the tying run to third but Alex Fonseca sent a groundball to the left side, with Lopez holding the runner and throwing to Edwards for the first out ... Anthony Albano then walked on five pitches and FAU sent freshman lefthander Robbie Widlansky up to pinch-hit for catcher Rob Orton. Doherty fell behind (2-0) before Widlansky took a strike and fouled off the next pitch ... the count then went full and Widlansky fouled off the next three pitches before sending a sharp grounder to the right side ... ND was positioned in a formation it practices on a daily basis, with Edwards playing back in order to ensure that the potential winning run is forced out at second (while likely foregoing the potential 3-6-3 double play) ... Edwards stabbed the grounder and threw to second for the initial forceout and Lopez alertly saw the freshman McBryde taking a big turn around third. With Edwards out of position for a return throw, Lopez quickly fired to junior third baseman Matt Macri, who ran McBryde down the line and relayed on to the catcher Sanchez to complete the dramatic game-ending rundown.

IRISH CRACK TOP 10 – The Notre Dame baseball team (6-0) – off to its best start since the 1960 team opened 9-0 – has moved up five spots to 7th in the *Collegiate Baseball* magazine poll while jumping eight spots to 11th in the *Baseball America* poll, moving from 12th to 9th in the *USA Today* coaches poll and bumping up from 11th to 10th in the National College Baseball Writers Association poll. ... the top six teams in the Collegiate Baseball poll include LSU, Stanford, Texas, Rice, South Carolina and Arizona State. Those six teams - plus Long Beach State and Miami - are ranked ahead of the Irish in the coaches poll (which lists Stanford first) while the teams ahead of Notre Dame in the Baseball America poll include the top eight teams from the coaches poll, plus Tulane and Auburn (Stanford also is first in the BA poll) ... the top nine in the NCBWA poll include each of the teams in the top-10 of the BA poll, with the exception of Auburn ... Notre Dame outscored the opposition 53-18 in four games last week ... ND's second game at next week's Round Rock Classic will feature a rematch from the 2003 NCAA opener between Notre Dame and Arizona, currently ranked as high as 16th (in the BA poll, plus 21st in the coaches poll and 26th in the CB top-30 poll).

OTHER QUICK NOTES FROM THE FAU CLASSIC

* The 19-6 win over Winthrop included a career day from sophomore SS Greg Lopez (4-for-6, 6 RBI, first career HR, 2B).

* The Irish put 29 runners on base vs. Winthrop, in a game that was scoreless and had featured just one baserunner (for Winthrop) after three innings ... 10 Irish batters combined for 18 hits during the final six innings, to go along with eight walks and one ND batter hit-by-pitch (two others reached on an error and fielder's choice).

* Junior 1B Matt Edwards and senior C Javi Sanchez posted similar stat lines vs. Winthrop, each totaling three hits, two RBI, two runs and double (Edwards added a walk) ... sophomore DH Steve Andres stroked a leadoff home run over the rightfield fence in the 8th (his fifth career home run with the Irish).

* Wins over Winthrop and Florida Memorial made the Irish 15-2 in their last 17 games vs. first-time opponents.

* The 4-0 week pushed ND to a +101 record over the past four seasons (150-49-1).

* The Irish now are 78-26-1 in regular-season tournaments during the Mainieri era and have avoided an 0-and-2 start in 20 of the last 21 regular-season tournaments.

* Sophomore LHP **Tom Thornton** (6 IP, career-best 7 Ks, 6 H) matched All-American Randy Beam in the 3-2 win over FAU (both pitchers allowed two runs while working late into the game).

* Notre Dame struck for three solo home runs vs. FAU, with senior catcher and Miami native Javi Sanchez tying the game in the top of the 4th (Matt Edwards then forged a 1-1 tie in the 7th and gave ND the decisive 3-2 lead in the 9th).

* Three different Irish relievers - junior righthander Tyler Jones, senior lefty Joe Thaman and sophomore righthander Ryan Doherty - each retired a batter in the 8th vs. FAU, with Doherty returning in the 9th to pick up the victory ... the performance of the ND bullpen was all the more noteworthy due to the absence of junior righthander Grant Johnson (sidelined with tonsillitis).

* FAU righthanded bullpen ace Craig Hughes had not allowed a run in six previous outings and 13.2 innings but Edwards ended that strong start with his 9th-inning HR.

* Six of Javi Sanchez's seven home runs with the Irish have come away from home.

* Sean Gaston (5-for-6), Matt Macri (4-for-6) and Brennan Grogan (4-for-5) - combined for 13 of the ND's 19 hits vs. Minnesota.

* Freshman RHP Dan Kapala came on in relief of senior lefthanded reliever Joe Thaman to pick up the win over Minnesota ... Kapala faced 12 batters while pitching the 6th-8th innings, allowing one run on three hits and striking out four Minnesota batters.

* Nine of the last 13 ND batters to post five-hit games (not counting the 6-hit games from righthanders Alec Porzel and Steve Sollmann) have been lefthander hitters: Dan Peltier and Joe Binkiewicz in '89, Scott Sollmann in '94, switch-hitter Allen Greene in '97, Dan Leatherman in '98, Steve Stanley in '01, '02 teammates Brian Stavisky and Paul O'Toole and Sean Gaston in '04.

TERRIFIC TWOSOME – Junior RHP **Chris Niesel** and sophomore LHP **Tom Thornton** have combined for some impressive numbers as the 1-2 starters in 2004, with a 1.40 combined ERA, a 5-to-1 K-to-walk ratio (25/5) and 21 hits allowed in 25.2 IP (.239).

RBI MACHINES – Kris Billmaier posted a six-RBI effort in the second game of the 2003 season (vs. Newman) but no Irish player turned in a game with 6-plus RBI during the rest of the '03 season ... just six games into 2004, two ND players – **Greg Lopez** (vs. Winthrop) and **Matt Macri** (vs. Minnesota) – already have posted 6-RBI games.

POWER PLAY – Notre Dame's pace of one home run per game is well ahead of the 2003 season, when the Irish averaged just under one home run every other game (31 HRs in 63 GP).

EARLY-SEASON CYCLE – Junior 3B **Matt Macri** is the only ND player to have hit at least one home run, triple and double in 2004 ... Macri's 83 career games with the Irish include 6 HR (5 in '03), 6 3B (5 in '03) and 19 2B (15 in '03) ...

AIRTIGHT – Notre Dame has made an early statement for owning one of the nation's top infields, as the four starters have combined to make just one error in the first six games (spanning 98 chances, for a .990 fielding pct. among those players) ... junior 1B **Matt Edwards** has played error-free (32 fielding chances) after making the full-time switch (he was a prep SS/3B and split time at 3B/1B in '03) ... senior 2B **Steve Sollmann** (22 chances) and junior 3B **Matt Macri** (13) also have yet to make an error in '04, after combining for 98 error-free games in 2003 (53 by Sollmann and 45 by Macri) ... sophomore SS **Greg Lopez** (31 chances) has made the only error by an ND starting infielder in 2003 ... the Irish defense as a whole has totaled twice as many double plays (6) as errors, with just two errors coming on balls put in play (the other was a catcher's interference) ... ND's .987 team fielding pct. is well ahead of the team record set in 2003 (.970), when the Irish totaled 73 errors in 63 games.

INNING-BY-INNING – Notre Dame traditionally has struggled scoring first-inning runs early in the season but the Irish already own a 4-0 scoring edge in the 1st – plus a 48-11 combined edge in the 4th-8th innings (12-3 in 4th, 11-4 in 5th, 8-3 in 6th, 10-0 in 7th, 7-1 in 8th) ... the team's most dominant back-to-back innings have been the 7th and 8th (17-1 combined).

SOLLMANN RECORD-BOOK WATCH – Senior 2B **Steve Sollmann** needs just 40 more hits to join former teammate Steve Stanley (385; '99-'02) as the only Notre Dame player to reach 300 career hits ... Sollmann already ranks **7th on the ND career hits list (160)**, nine behind his brother Scott's former classmate Mike Amrhein (269; '94-'97) ... Sollmann also is tied with Dan Bautch ('90-'02) for **5th** on the ND career **stolen-base list (68)**, behind Stanley (116), Sollmann's brother Scott (101; '94-'96), Pat Pesavento (94; '86-'89) and Greg Layson (80; '91-'94) ... Sollmann's **.368 career batting avg. ranks 5th** in the ND record book behind Peltier (.406), Eric Danapilis (.405, '90-'93), Stanley (.384) and the elder Sollmann (.372) ... he also ranks 10th with 177 career runs scored (six behind former teammate Alec Porzel),

QUICK NOTES FROM THE USC PUBLIC STORAGE CLASSIC

• **Thornton Pitcher Of The Week** – ND sophomore LHP **Tom Thornton** (Middleboro, Mass.) received BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week honors in recognition of his primetime performance vs. **#20 USC (6 IP, UER, 4 H, 2 BB, 4 Ks; 3-1)** ... Thornton allowed 2-of-6 leadoff batters to reach but held USC to 1-for-6 batting with runners on base ... the USC lefthanders combined to hit just 1-for-5 vs. the 6-6, 215-pound southpaw ... Thornton located 46 of his 81 pitches for strikes (57%), with three Ks on called third strikes.

• Thornton's outing vs. USC ranks among the **top opening-week performances** in the 10-year Paul Mainieri era ... RHP **Scott Cavey** is the only other Mainieri-era pitcher to not allow an earned run in 6-plus innings of work during the first week of action (Cavey did so as a senior in '00, in a 6-0 win vs. Air Force in Millington, Tenn.) ... others of note include sophomore RHP Alex Shilliday's 5 shutout innings vs. Florida State ('98, in Orlando) and three others who tossed 4 innings without an earned run.

• Thornton is the 10th Irish player (first LHP) to receive a BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week honor, since ND joined the BIG EAST in the '95-'96 ... Notre Dame has produced **24 BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week recipients** in the last nine years, the most from any of the league's schools during that stretch (Rutgers is next with 21, followed by West Virginia's 16 and 10 from St. John's) ... ND's previous BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week recipients include 10-time honoree Aaron **Heilman**, from '98-'01 (no other BIG EAST pitcher ever has totaled more than four) ... two other ND pitchers – Scott **Cavey** ('97-'00) and Danny **Tamayo** ('98, '00-'01) – are tied for fourth on the BIG EAST list with three career BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week awards while current junior Chris **Niesel** and recent starter/closer specialist J.P. **Gagne** ('00-'03) each own two BIG EAST weekly awards ... the other four Notre Dame pitchers who have received weekly BIG EAST honors include Christian **Parker** ('96), Brad **Lidge** ('98), Alex **Shilliday** ('98) and Peter **Ogilvie** ('02).

• Junior RHP **Chris Niesel** (Plantation, FL) posted his **10th straight winning decision** with ND in the 7-1 win over SDSU ... Niesel extended his record with the Irish to **14-1** while lowering his career ERA to **2.91** ... the staff ace posted **9 strikeouts for the 6th time** in his Irish career (to go along with two double-digit K games) while scattering three hits and one walk over 5.2 innings ... since suffering the only loss of his ND career (7-1 vs. Nebraska, on Feb. 28, 2003, at the Minnesota Metrodome), Niesel has dominated to the tune of a **1.92 ERA and 10-0 record in his last 14 starts** with the Irish ... he owns a 5.2 K-to-walk ratio in that span (**93 Ks/18 BB, in 94.0 IP**), allowing just **74 hits and .215** opponent batting in those 14 games (9-inning averages of 8.9 Ks, 1.7 BB, 7.1 H).

• **Matt Edwards** (Mechanicsville, Va.) **homered in his first at-bat** of the season en route to one of the top opening-day performances by an Irish hitter in the last 10 years ... Edwards became the sixth player in the 10-year Mainieri era to hit a home run in the season opener (his ninth HR in 73 games with the Irish) ... no previous Mainieri-era player had homered in his first at-bat of a season opener - and Edwards was far from done, adding a two-run single in the 5th before scorching a double in the 7th ... his **4 RBI** are **most in a Mainieri-era opener** while Edwards' 3-for-5 day shy of Steve Sollmann's '01 effort vs. New Orleans (4-for-5, at Mississippi State) as the top opening-day hit total in the Mainieri era.

• Notre Dame improved to **6-1 in its last seven season openers**, 12-7-1 in California during the Mainieri era and 73-26-1 in regular-season tournaments since '95 ... the Irish also have posted a winning or even record in 16 of their last 18 regular-season tournaments ... the win over SDSU was the 400th for the Irish during 10 seasons under head coach **Paul Mainieri**, who now owns a **401-160-1** record at Notre Dame (.714) ... the 400th win came just **140 games after the 300th** win of the Mainieri era.

• Just **three Notre Dame teams in the previous 30 seasons** had registered a **more comfortable margin in a season opener** (7-1) ... the '89 team opened with a 12-2 win over Trinity while the '98 squad beat Florida State 10-1 in the opener (in Orlando).

• The SDSU game featured two noteworthy relief appearances for the Irish ... senior LHP **Joe Thaman** – ND's starting 1B in the '01-'03 seasons – came on to get the final out in the 6th, with the St. Louis native serving up a soft grounder to strand two runners ... junior RHP **Grant Johnson** (Burr Ridge, Ill.) – who missed all of the '03 season while recovering from shoulder surgery, after a Freshman All-America season in '02 – added shutout innings in the 7th and 8th (2 H, BB, 2 Ks).

• Senior 2B **Steve Sollmann** had a strong debut from his customary leadoff spot, batting 2-for-3 with a pair of walks and two runs scored ... the Cincinnati native – who has hit a combined **9-for-16 (.563) in four season openers** with the Irish – pushed his **career hit** total to **257**, tying fellow All-American Dan Peltier ('87-'89) for 7th in the Notre Dame record book.

• San Diego State became the **280th all-time opponent** in 112 seasons of Notre Dame baseball (the Irish are **14-2 in their last 16** games when **facing a first-time opponent**, dating back to 2000).

• The Irish **avoided an 0-and-2 start for the 19th time in last 20** regular-season tournaments (ND has gone 0-and-2 at a regular-season tournament just three times under Mainieri and has not gone 0-and-2 at a postseason tournament since 1960).

• **Niesel's 27 career starts** with the Irish include allowing just **two earned runs** (the equivalent of a 0.67 ERA, with both runs by CS Fullerton in the '03 NCAAAs), plus **32 Ks, 5 BB** (6.4 K/BB ratio), **21 hits** allowed and .208 opp. batting in **1st inning** of his ND career.

• In the win over USC, Notre Dame put 13 men on base but failed to produce a big inning, with junior 3B **Matt Macri** (Clive, Iowa) providing the only Irish RBI on a double in the 5th.

• The ND pitchers combined for a 0.56 ERA, totaling 18 Ks and only 5 walks while allowing just 9 hits (.170 opp. avg.) in 16 inning ... the 0.56 ERA blows away the program's previous best during an opening weekend (2.05 in 2000, to go along with a .241 opponent batting avg. that was bested by last weekend's .170, also tops in the Mainieri era) ... in fact, the opponent slugging pct. from last weekend's action (.208) even is lower than that 2000 opponent batting (the '01 staff allowed .292 slugging in opening week).

• Notre Dame's .310 team batting average in the wins over SDSU and USC represents the team's 3rd-best opening-week batting average in the 10-year Mainieri era (the '03 team opened by batting .367 and the '95 squad .352).

• ND – coming off a record .970 season fielding pct. in '03 – played error-free on customary fielding (only E on catcher's interference, vs. USC) ... the resulting .985 fielding pct. is the best opening-week effort by a Mainieri-era squad (besting the .971/3 Es in '00).

• Sophomore RF **Cody Rizzo** now is a .533 career hitter with the Irish during opening-week games (8-for-15) while sophomore SS **Greg Lopez** has hit a combined 5-for-13 (.385) in opening-week action with the Irish.

• The Irish are nearing a +100 record during the past four seasons (146-49-1) and will be looking to post the program's first 3-0 start since 1992, with Notre Dame typically facing several warm-weather schools at the start of each season.

IRISH POST 400th WIN OF MAINIERI ERA

Tenth-year Notre Dame head coach **Paul Mainieri** – now in his 22nd overall season – already was averaging 40 wins per season with the Irish just one game into the '04 season, as ND posted the 400th win of the Mainieri era in the opener vs. San Diego State (now **405-160-1/716**) ... Mainieri picked up his 700th career coaching victory vs. Georgetown on March 29, 2003, 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 **736-439-2** career record (**.626**) includes 179-121-1 at St. Thomas ('83-'88) and 152-158 at Air Force ('89-'94) ... his ND career includes five BIG EAST titles and six NCAA trips with the Irish ('96, '99-'03), the program's first No. 1 ranking (in '01) 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 15** (nation's 3rd-longest active streak) ... **35 of his ND players** have moved on to **pro ball**, including **12 drafted in the first 10 rounds** and a **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 (**53 of 53**) 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 (.741, 137-48)** ... in 73 BIG EAST series spanning eight seasons, the Irish have won 55 series with nine splits and only nine series wins by the opponent (just two of them being 3-game sweeps) ... the Irish have been swept just four times in 71 all-time BIG EAST doubleheaders (42 ND sweeps, 25 splits) ... Mainieri's **first nine ND teams averaged 45 wins** per season.

CHRIS NIESEL NOTES

2003 Nine-Inning Averages: 7.9 hits, 1.7 walks, 8.0 Ks, 10.3 groundouts (6.2 IP per outing; 36.8 BF per 9 IP)

2003 Situational Pitching: .222 opp. batting with runners on, .207 with 2 outs, 29% of leadoff batters reached (2.6 per 9 IP)

- Has allowed just three 1st-inning runs during his ND career (equivalent of 0.96 ERA, plus 29 Ks, 5 BB, 22 H and .220 opp. avg. in those 28 first innings).
- Prior to last week's 19-6 win over Winthrop, Niesel's average run support in 27 previous starts with the Irish was just five runs per game (ND had scored 10-plus runs in just four of his previous starts while plating 0-3 in 12).
- His .938 career win pct. (15-1) is on pace to best the ND record (min. 16 decisions) held by Herb Kelly (.917, 22-2 from 1912-14) ... Aaron Heilman (.860, 43-7 from '98-'01) is the only ND pitcher since 1924 to win more than 80-pct. of his decisions.
- His three opening-week starts at ND now include a 3.24 ERA, 1-0 record and nearly a 7-to-1 K-to-walk ratio (20 Ks/3 BB, 16.2 IP).
- Tossed near no-hitter vs. hot-hitting West Virginia (.330 team avg.) on May 3, 2003, allowing Lee Fritz bunt single with two outs left in 7-inning opener (23 BF, BB, 9 Ks) ... would have been first no-hitter by ND pitcher since 1988 (Brian Piotrowicz vs. Ball State).
- Averaged nearly 20 outs per 9 IP in 2003 via Ks (8.0) or groundouts (10.3).
- Posted a 4.6 season K-to-walk ratio in 2003 that ranks 7th in ND history ... his 4.08 career K-to-BB ratio (163/40) is ahead of Alan Waliana's ND record (4.00, from '90-'93).
- Allowed just two home runs in 98.1 innings during 2003 season, after serving up team-high 7 in 2002 (72.1 IP) ... went 11 outings without allowing a home run before a Spencer Harris 3-run blast in the final 2003 regular-season series at Virginia Tech.
- 10th ND pitcher with multiple double-digit K games (10 vs. So. Ill. in '02, 11 vs. Villanova in '03) and 5th to do so in 10-year Mainieri era (others are Brad Lidge, Tim Kalita, Aaron Heilman, Danny Tamayo) ... also owns six 9-K games in his ND career (four in '03, plus last week vs. SDSU) ... combined with John Axford (12 vs. WMU) as 10th pair of ND teammates with 10-plus Ks in same season ('03).
- Fourth ND player ever to receive multiple BIG EAST pitcher-of-the-week honors in same season, joining Aaron Heilman (3 in '99, 4 in '00, 2 in '01), Scott Cavey (2 in '00) and Danny Tamayo (3 in '01).
- His 15-1 career record with the Irish could include upwards of nine more wins (due to lack of run support or lost leads by the bullpen), with his '02 season also interrupted by mononucleosis and the hand injury holding him out of the '03 BIG EAST Tournament.
- Career postseason stats: 2.05 ERA in six outings (five starts), plus 27 Ks, 11 BB and 29 hits allowed in 34.1 IP (he won the 3-1 clincher at top-ranked Florida State in the Super-Regional and had a strong CWS start vs. Rice).

QUITE A RESPONSE – Notre Dame junior RHP **Chris Niesel** boasted a 22-1 overall streak – 13-0 as a senior at St. Thomas Aquinas HS, 4-0 as a freshman at ND, 3-1 in summer of '02 with the Cape Cod League's Falmouth Commodores, and 2-0 in the '01 and '02 Blue-Gold intrasquad scrimmages – before suffering the first loss of his ND career, a 7-1 game vs. Nebraska at the Minnesota Metrodome Classic (2/28/03) ... Niesel responded to that loss in fine fashion, closing the 2003 college season with a 1.94 ERA and 9-0 record in his final 13 appearances – with 84 Ks and just 17 BB in 88.1 IP, for a 4.9 K-to-walk ratio, plus 71 hits allowed and a .218 opponent batting average in that 13-outing span ... with the addition of his 2004 wins over SDSU and Winthrop, Niesel's **last 15** appearances include a **1.87 ERA, 11-0 record, 5.1 K-to-walk** ratio (98 Ks/20 BB, in 101 innings), 82 hits and a **.228 opp. batting avg.** (9-inning averages of 8.7 Ks, 1.8 BB, 7.3 H in that 101-inning stretch).

ON A ROLL – Chris Niesel won his final nine decisions of the 2003 season and has opened 2004 with win over San Diego State and Winthrop, yielding an **11-decision overall winning streak** that still is shy of the Notre Dame record ... Ed Walsh won 17 straight decisions spanning the 1926-28 seasons ... Aaron Heilman (15-0 in 2001) is the only ND pitcher in the last 75 years to post more than 13 consecutive winning decisions ... Niesel's classmate John Axford won 13 straight decisions (5th-longest in ND history), spanning the 2002 (4) and '03 (9) seasons ... two others join Walsh and Heilman with the longest winning streaks in the ND record book: Frank "Dreams" Scanlan (16; 1907-09) and Herb Kelly (14; 1912-14) ... Niesel nearly posted a 10-decision single-season winning streak in '03, which would have tied for the 2nd-longest in recorded ND history.

ALL-AMERICAN DUO – Notre Dame boasts multiple returning All-Americans – senior 2B **Steve Sollmann** and junior RHP **Chris Niesel** – for the second time in the program's history, with the 1999 squad also featuring a returning All-America position player (junior IF Brant Ust) and pitcher (sophomore RHP Aaron Heilman) ... five other ND seasons have featured returning All-Americans: 1957 (senior C Elmer Kohorst), 1961 (RHP Nick Palihnich), 2000 (Heilman's junior season), 2001 (Heilman's senior season) and 2002 (senior CF Steve Stanley) ... Sollmann has the chance to follow Kohorst and Stanley as the third ND position player to be a multi-year All-American (Heilman is the program's only other player to hold that distinction, as a rare four-year honoree).

WINNING BIG & SMALL - Notre Dame was 9-1 in 2003 one-run games (including 4-3 NCAA loss to Cal State Fullerton) while posting 24 "big wins" (margin of five-plus runs) ... by comparison, ND's 2002 College World Series team was 9-8 in one-run games and totaled 21 wins by 5-plus runs ... the 2003 trend has continued in '04, as the Irish already own a one-run win (3-2 at FAU, making ND 10-1 in its last 11 one-run games) while posting four "big wins" in the young '04 season (7-1 vs. San Diego State, 19-6 vs. Winthrop, 12-3 vs. Florida Memorial, 19-7 vs. Minnesota)

NEW-LOOK INFIELD

Notre Dame's 2004 opening-day infield had a distinctively new look, with four veterans moving to new spots to yield what could be an even tighter defensive unit than the '03 squad (which set the ND record with a .970 season fielding pct.) ... the resulting formation includes high school shortstops at three positions (sophomore SS **Greg Lopez**, junior 3B **Matt Macri**, junior 1B **Matt Edwards**), one of the nation's top-rated defensive 2B (senior **Steve Sollmann**) and a second-year catcher who was a prep 2B (senior **Javi Sanchez**, who was the starting SS on the '02 CWS team after early-season injuries to Macri and Edwards) ... here are the changes and how they came about:

- The dominoes began to fall with the emergence of **Lopez** (Upper Arlington, Ohio), who played error-free in the first 15 days of '03 fall ball ... Lopez – a regular shortstop dating back to his tee-ball days – was a part-time starter at third base for the Irish in 2003 but earned the chance to compete for his familiar shortstop role during the 2003 fall season.

- The returning starter at shortstop, **Macri** (Clive, Iowa), missed the first couple weeks of '03 fall ball with a thumb injury suffered late in the summer season ... as luck would have it, Macri had spent the summer playing third base for the Brewster Whitecaps of the Cape Cod League (that team included two other college SS), emerging as a top pro prospect at the hot corner ... the combination of Macri's prospects at third and Lopez's strong play at shortstop (plus the bonus of his boost in strength and offensive production) resulted in a shuffling on the left side ... Macri was slotted 33rd on the *Perfect Game/Baseball America* list (Oct. '03) of top college prospects for the 2004 draft (he was the fourth infielder on that list), with *BA* also rating him as the BIG EAST Conference's "best defensive third baseman" and "infielder with the strongest arm."

- **Edwards** (Mechanicsville, Va.) – who split time at third and first base with the Irish in '03 - then headed across the diamond to focus on first base.

- The most intriguing change has involved senior **Joe Thaman** (St. Louis, Mo.), who made a name for himself as one of college baseball's top defensive first basemen during the '01-'03 seasons ... inconsistency on the offensive end prompted Thaman to follow through on an idea that he'd floated earlier in his career: a move to the mound ... Thaman naturally has provided some key tips to help Edwards in his transition.

- **Sanchez** (Miami, Fla.) is the wildcard in the whole equation, holding a unique dual role as starting catcher and top utility infielder ... if Sollmann, Lopez or Macri are forced from a game, the Irish coaching staff's first inclination will be to shift Sanchez into any of those infield spots (with freshman catcher **Sean Gaston** a solid option behind the plate).

TOURNAMENT-TOUGH – Notre Dame is **75-26-1 (.740) in regular-season tournaments during the Paul Mainieri era**, highlighted by a 1998 win over Florida State, wins in 2000 over Wake Forest, Georgia and Illinois (2), 2001 wins over Mississippi State (2), Fresno State and Illinois, another win over Wake Forest in 2003, and the '04 wins at USC and Florida Atlantic ... the Irish have not had a losing record in 17 of their last 19 regular-season tournaments (55-14-1 record in those events), dating back to a 1-2 showing at the ACC Disney Blast early in 1998 ... here are the regular-season tournaments during the Mainieri era:

'95 – Anaheim Classic (at CS Fullerton, 1-2) ... College Baseball Classic (Seattle, 3-0) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 2-2)
'96 – Service Academies Classic (Millington, TN; 3-1) ... Husky Classic (Seattle, 2-1) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 4-0)
'97 – Long Beach State Classic (0-3) ... Service Academies Classic (Millington, TN; 2-0) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 3-1)
'98 – ACC Disney Blast (Orlando, 1-2) ... Diamond Classic (Evansville, IN; 3-0) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 1-0)
'99 – New Orleans Invitational (2-1) ... Irish Baseball Classic (San Antonio, 4-0)
'00 – Service Academies Classic (Millington, TN; 2-1) ... Minnesota Hormel Foods Classic (2-1) ... Kennel Clubs Classic (7-1)
'01 – Miss. St. Classic (2-1) ... Alamo Invit. (San Antonio, 3-0) ... Devil Rays Invit. (St. Pete., FL; 2-1) ... Fresno St. Classic (5-0-1)
'02 – New Orleans Classic (1-2) ... Homestead (Fla.) Challenge (3-1) ... Round Rock Classic (1-3) ... IBC (San Antonio, 4-0)
'03 – Minnesota DQ Metrodome Classic (1-2) ... Kennel Clubs Classic (Jacksonville, 6-1)
'04 – USC Classic (2-0), Florida Atlantic Classic (3-0)

STATION TO STATION – Freshman 2B **Chris Fournier** has collected just one hit this season in limited action, but the former Connecticut player of the year has reached base five other times (2 BB, 2HBP) and has come around to score in five of his six total times on base ... just four ND players have crossed home plate more times than Fournier in the earlygoing of the '04 season.

THREE-YEAR TEAR – Notre Dame racked up a **144-49-1 record during the '01-'03 seasons** (49-13-1 in '01, 50-18 in '02, 45-18 in '03), with **only four teams totaling more wins** over that three-year span: Florida State (161), Rice (157), South Carolina (151) and Stanford (149).

PRESEASON RESPECT – Notre Dame is **one of seven** teams that have been in the *Baseball America* **preseason top-20** every season **since 2000** ... the others include Rice, LSU, Cal State Fullerton, Georgia Tech, Stanford and Baylor ... Notre Dame checked in at 20th in *BA*'s 2000 preseason poll, followed by 9th in 2001, 5th in '02 and 12th in '03.

QUALITY ROAD WINS – Notre Dame's early-season wins over USC and Florida Atlantic gave the Irish more wins over top-25 teams on their home field (USC was ranked as high as 20th in the *Collegiate Baseball* magazine poll while FAU was ranked as high as 12th, also by *CB*) ... previous Notre Dame teams have posted noteworthy wins over homestanding traditional powers such as Miami, Florida State, LSU, Texas, Clemson and Mississippi State (all since 1989) ... one difference in the wins over USC and FAU were that ND was the higher-ranked team.

BACK TO CALI – ND's opening-day lineup featured all three of the California natives on the '04 roster: sophomore RF **Cody Rizzo** (Temecula/Chaparral HS), sophomore DH **Steve Andres** (Napa/Siena HS) and freshman CF **Danny Dressman** (San Jose/Mitty HS).

FAMILIAR CLIMATE – Notre Dame started its 2004 season in a familiar part of the country (at the USC Classic), as the final games of ND's 2003 season were played at nearby Cal State Fullerton in the 2003 NAAs ... the 2001 Irish team made a true return in its season-opening trip, starting that '01 season at the Mississippi State Classic (the 2000 team lost to the host Bulldogs in the title game of the '00 NCAA Starkville Regional).

SOUTH FLORIDA CAPTAINS – Notre Dame's 2004 squad includes two of three team captains who hail from south Florida: senior C **Javi Sanchez** (Miami/Columbus HS) and junior RHP **Chris Niesel** (Plantation/Aquinas HS) ... it marks the first time that multiple Florida natives have served as captains of a Notre Dame baseball squad ... in fact, just two previous Florida natives ever have served as ND baseball captains: IF **Joe LaRocca** (Ft. Lauderdale/Gibbons HS) in '72 and OF **Henry Valenzuela** (Tampa/Jesuit HS) in '82.

BIG BOYS – Notre Dame's 2004 roster includes some big bodies, with nine players checking in at 6-4 or taller – led by a pitching staff that averages 6-foot-4, 215 pounds ... topping the charts are the lofty sophomore tandem of RHP **Ryan Doherty** (7-1/220) and LHP **Tom Thornton** (6-6/215), plus junior RHPs **Grant Johnson** (6-5/215) and **John Axford** (6-5/180), junior LHP **Scott Bickford** (6-5/170), freshman 1B/LHP **Mike Dury** (6-5/225), freshman RHP **Dan Kapala** (6-5/210) and senior LHP/1B **Joe Thaman** (6-4/210).

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON – Seven current Irish players are second-generation college baseball players: junior **Chris Niesel** (Rudy Niesel, Spring Hill), junior 1B/3B **Matt Edwards** (Norm Edwards, Stetson), junior LHP **Scott Bickford** (Mark Bickford, Salisbury State), sophomore C **Nick Mainieri** (Paul Mainieri, New Orleans), freshman 1B **Mike Dury** (John Dury, N.C. State), freshmen RHP **Jeff Manship** (John Manship, Arizona) and freshman RHP/1B **Chris Vasami** (Ralph Vasami, NYU).

G-A-S-T-O-N SPELLS RELIEF – Notre Dame has added one of the nation's top freshman catchers in the form of in-state talent **Sean Gaston** (Brownsburg), who was the runner-up for the 2003 Indiana Mr. Baseball Award ... the arrival of Gaston gives the Irish a strong catching tandem, with senior **Javi Sanchez** (who also is the team's top utility infielder and a leading righthanded DH option) now able to catch fewer innings this season ... Sanchez caught 86% of the innings in 2003 (476 of 554), including 92% in the second half of the season and 71 of 72 in the '03 postseason.

SCHEDULE CHANGES – Fans are reminded to note several changes to the 2004 ND baseball schedule in recent weeks (always consult und.com for the most up-to-date schedule information) ... the primary changes involving one-day shifts in lateseason BIG EAST series vs. Connecticut and Rutgers ... all of the changes are listed below:

- Due to a change in the University of Connecticut finals schedule, ND's series at UConn in early May has been pushed back one day. The teams now will play a noon doubleheader on Sunday, May 9, and the third game of the series will be played at noon on Monday, May 10.
- The above ND-UConn series will have Tuesday, May 11, available as a makeup day - thus removing the previously scheduled ND-Bowling Green game (May 11) ... Bowling Green now is not on the official 56-game schedule, although the Irish and Falcons could play in a makeup-game scenario at some point in the 2004 season.
- The shift in the ND-UConn series also has resulted in a one-day shift the following weekend when Rutgers will visit Eck Stadium to face the Irish ... the teams now will play a doubleheader on Saturday, May 15 (12:05 p.m.) and then will wrap up the series several hours after graduation ceremonies, in the first Sunday-night game in Eck Stadium history (May 16, 7:05).
- The 56-game schedule has been filled out with a game vs. Central Michigan on Tuesday, March 23 (5:05) ... this game now will serve as the home opener and fills the void on the schedule after dropping the Bowling Green game.
- The doubleheader at Pittsburgh on Sunday, April 25, now will begin at 11:00 a.m.

PERFECT CLOSERS – Every four-year player in the Paul Mainieri era (since '95) has graduated from Notre Dame, an impressive 53-of-53 streak that does not include eight former players who signed as juniors but have returned to complete or near completion of their degree requirements (including two-time Academic All-American Brian Stavisky).

40-SOMETHING – Notre Dame owns 15 straight seasons with 40-plus wins, including 49 in 2001, 48 in '89 and '92, 46 in '90, '93, '94 and '00, 45 in '91 and '03, and 44 in '95 ... ND's active streak of seasons with 40-plus wins ranks 3rd in Division I, behind Florida State and Wichita State (both with 26 straight 40-win seasons).

Opening-Day Home Runs in the Mainieri Era

Bob Lisanti (Sr., C, '96) – at Georgia Tech (4-12)
Brant Ust (Jr., SS, '99) – vs. JMU, at FIU (8-4)
Kris Billmaier (Sr., RF, '03) – vs. Dayton, @ASU (10-9)

Dan Leatherman (Jr., 1B, '98) – vs. Florida State, in Orlando (10-1)
Matt Bok (Sr., DH, '02) – vs. Missouri, @UNO (7-6)
Matt Edwards (Jr., 1B, '04) – vs. San Diego State, @USC (7-1)

Top Opening-Week Pitchers in Paul Mainieri Era (min. 3 IP)

Player (Year)	R/ER	IP	K	BB	H-AB	AVG	WP/HB	W-L (SV)	ERA
Tom Thornton (So., '04 vs. USC)	1/0	6.0	4	2	4-19	.211	0/0	1-0 (0)	0.00
Scott Cavey (Sr., '00 vs. Air Force)	0/0	6.0	6	1	1-19	.053	0/0	1-0 (0)	0.00
Alex Shilliday (So., '98 vs. FSU)	0/0	5.0	6	4	1-16	.063	0/1	1-0 (0)	0.00

PROSPECT PROGNOSTICATIONS

A glance through *Baseball America's* annual college preview issue shows many accolades for the Notre Dame baseball program while highlighting the many challenging opponents that await the Irish in 2004.

- *BA* picked the Irish to win their fifth BIG EAST regular-season title, with senior 2B **Steve Sollmann**, junior 1B **Matt Edwards**, sophomore OF **Cody Rizzo** and junior RHP **Chris Niesel** each named to *BA's* **preseason all-BIG EAST** team (Sollmann was projected as the player of the year).
- *BA's* list of the league's top-10 prospects include three ND juniors: RHP **Grant Johnson** (2nd), 3B/SS **Matt Macri** (4th) and Niesel (5th) ... **Macri** also was rated as the nation's **#41 prospect among true juniors** ... **Johnson** has two years of eligibility left and was slotted by *BA* as the **#12 prospect for the '05 draft**, along with current sophomores/second-year juniors (an **earlier Oct. '03 projection** by *BA* had him rated as college baseball's **No. 24** draft-eligible prospect **for the '04 draft**, with **Macri 33rd**, **Niesel 39th** and junior RHP **John Axford 44th**, prior to his season-ending elbow surgery) ... **Macri** is the fourth 2B/SS/3B on the junior prospects list, behind Georgia Tech 2B Eric Patterson, Clemson 3B Brad McCann and Arizona State SS Dustin Pedroia.
- **Sollmann** is **12th** on *BA's* list of the top **senior prospects** while sophomore RHP **Ryan Doherty** is **47th** on *BA's* list of the nation's top **sophomore** prospects (he is the 20th pitcher and 15th RHP on that list) ... freshman RHP **Jeff Manship** is *BA's* **No. 3-rated freshman** prospect behind UNC lefthander Andrew Miller and Southern California RHP/OF Ian Kennedy (Manship underwent elbow surgery on Feb. 11) ... another Irish RHP, **Derik Olvey**, checks in at **#22 on the freshman prospects** list, with ND joining UNC (1/9) and Tulane (16/24) as the only schools with multiple players among the top 25 on that list ... Manship and Olvey were rated 1-2 among *BA's* list of the BIG EAST's top five newcomers.
- *BA's* list of "top tools" among BIG EAST players includes **Sollmann** as the league's **"best baserunner"** and **"best defensive 2B"** while **Macri** is cited as the **"best defensive 3B"** and **"best infield arm."**
- The BIG EAST was listed 7th among *BA's* rankings of the nation's top conferences, behind the SEC, ACC, Pac-10, Big 12, C-USA and Big West ... the BIG EAST also owned the 7th-most alums currently in the Major Leagues (19) on *BA's* top conferences chart.

Here's a look at how *BA* rates Notre Dame's upcoming 2004 opponents (see release on und.com for full list of opponent info. ... national ratings for "top tools" and other categories had yet to be released):

Alamo City Irish Baseball Classic (March 6-9)

Southern Illinois (30-25 in '03, 3rd in MVC at 17-13, 3-2 at MVC Tour.; 17 of 21 LWs returning) - picked to finish 2nd I MVC, behind Wichita State ... projected all-MC players include 1B Logan Sorenson and 2B Greg Andrews ("best def 2B") ... P.J. Finigan is rated the MVC's "best defensive SS" ... teams also will play at SIU on March 20-21.

Texas-San Antonio (29-27 in '03, 6th in Southland at 12-15; 14 of 25 LWs returning) - picked to finish 8th in Southland.

Penn State (29-28 in '03, 3rd in Big Ten at 17-15, 3rd at Big Ten Tour.; 19 of 26 LWs returning) - picked to finish 5th in Big Ten ... RHP Clay Hamilton is league's #7 prospect, Matt Harter "best catchers arm" ... ND and PSU also will meet in Round on March 11.

Round Rock Classic (March 11-14)

Arizona (35-23 in '03, 4th in Pac-10 at 13-11, 0-2 at NCAA Fullerton Reg.; return 18 of 28 LWs) - 16th in preseason poll, picked to finish 2nd in Pac-10 behind Stanford ... 3B Brad Boyer ("fastest runner" and "best defensive 3B") is projected for all-Pac-10 honors while OF Jeff Van Houten (won '03 Pac-10 batting title at .413, 11 HR, 72 RBI, then was Valley league MVP after batting .391 in summer of '03) is touted as a 1st team All-American ... SS Jason Donald is rated league's #3 newcomer and nation's #12 freshman prospect (OF D.J. Lewis is 42nd) ... OF Trevor Crowe (16th) and #35 C Nick Hundley (35th) are rated among the nation's top sophomore prospects ... UA ranked 9th in the nation in runs and 2nd in SBs in '03 but could feature an entirely new pitching rotation in '04.

Texas Tech (30-25 in '03, 9th in Big 12 at 8-19; return 14 of 21 LWs) - picked to finish 7th in B-12 ... Cody Fuller cited as league's "fastest runner."

Illinois (27-26 in '03, 8th in Big Ten at 12-19; return 14 of 23 LWs) - picked to finish 4th in Big Ten ... OF Drew Davison projected as all-conference player, C Chris Robinson #8 prospect, Eric Eymann "best defensive SS."

Home Opener - **Central Michigan** (3/23; 25-28 in '03, 9-15 in MAC West) - picked to finish 4th in MAC West ... LHP Jayson Ruhlman is rated league's #5 prospect.

COUNTDOWN TO OPENING DAY PROVIDES BONUS OFFERINGS – The official Notre Dame athletics website (und.com) included a wide variety of features leading up to the 2004 Irish baseball season ... the Irish – ranked as high as 10th in the preseason polls – head into the 10th season of the Paul Mainieri era looking to add to the legacy of success for a program that dates back to 1892 and includes more than 800 former ND baseball monogram winners ... the "Countdown to Opening Day" offerings spanned offerings such as: weekly practice reports; audio extras and photo galleries; various preseason national polls and awards; ND Baseball History Book entries; a "Catching Up With" series featuring former ND baseball players; and a regular ND Baseball Trivia Corner ... see the Countdown headline on the und.com baseball page for links to the various features – and stay tuned for more throughout the season.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? – The first nine years of the **Paul Mainieri** era at Notre Dame ('95-'03) included many noteworthy individuals who have gone on to distinguish themselves after completing their Irish baseball careers ... included among the 61 former Mainieri players listed below are: three pitchers who have reached the Major Leagues, 11 other current pro baseball players (plus 21 former pro players), seven lawyers/current law students, three medical-school students, 12 others who have received or are pursuing postgraduate degrees (three of them MBAs, one Ph.D.), three engineers, five involved in medical supplies sales, eight college/high school coaches, three commodity brokers, a prospective dentist, a sports agent, a contractor and a town mayor – plus others involved in areas such as youth services, accounting, sales, athletic administration, technology, advertising, graphic design, banking and consulting ... see p. 15 of the 2004 ND baseball media guide or und.com (click “news”) for the complete list.

Notre Dame Baseball 2003 Final Summer Stats (College Wood-Bat Leagues)

Here's a final look at 2003 summer baseball stats for current Notre Dame baseball players:

Matt Macri (Brewster Whitecaps, Cape Cod League) – finished second in the CCL with 7 HRs (behind the 11 by USC's Joey Metropoulos, with Falmouth) ... chosen for the CCL home run derby ... hit mostly in the 3-hole ... played at 3B, with team featuring two other college starting SS ... helped Brewster share Eastern Division title (24-17-3) ... hit .172 (21-for-122) on squad with .231 team batting avg., plus 23 runs, 7 home runs, 1 triple, 4 doubles, 16 RBI, 30 walks, 8-of-11 stolen bases in 36 games played ... saw his summer season end due to hand injury in late July.

Chris Niesel (Falmouth Commodores, Cape Cod League) – served in new role as bullpen ace, ranking 5th in the CCL with 7 saves ... also posted 1-4 record in 13 games (3 starts), with 33 strikeouts, 11 walks and 24 hits allowed in 26.1 innings ... team finished 16-26.

John Axford (Cotuit Kettleers, Cape Cod League) – joined CCL in midseason after completing training with the Canadian National Team ... made 7 appearances with Cotuit (9.00, 1-0, 9 IP, 4 H, 16 BB, 8 Ks) ... team finished 20-21.

Javi Sanchez (Madison Mallards, Northwest League) – helped team win first-half league title, en route to 38-26 final record ... split time at C/3B while playing in front of large crowds that numbered up to 4,000 ... hit .262 (50-for-191) on squad with .257 team batting avg. ... added 19 R, 2 2B, 26 RBI, 17 BB, 9-16 SV, a .272 slugging pct., .325 on-base pct. and 10 errors in 53 games played.

Joe Thaman (Madison Mallards, Northwest League) – hit .215 (28-for-130) with 12 RBI (48 GP, 13 R, 7 2B, HR, 13 BB, 5-7 SB, .292 slugging, .301 on-base, 6 Es).

Tyler Jones (Madison Mallards, Northwest League) – made 10 appearances (4 starts) with 15 Ks in 32 IP (8.72, 0-4, 4 HB, 12 BB, 3 WP, .368 opp. avg.).

Tom Thornton (Newport Gulls, New England Baseball League) – ranked 4th on staff with 2.91 ERA in 9 appearances and 8 starts (3-1, 2 complete games, 1 shutout, 52.2 IP, 48 H, 23 BB, 43 Ks, .247 opp. batting, 1 WP, 1 HB, 25-14 team record).

Martin Vergara (Sanford Mainers, New England Baseball League) – made 7 relief appearances and 1 start, with a 3.21 ERA (1-0, 14 IP, 11 H, 8 BB, 7 Ks, .220, WP, 28-13 team record).

Craig Cooper (Hays Larks, Jayhawk League) – enjoyed stellar summer while playing LF and batting in 2 and 3 hole for most of season ... stayed with Flax family that has hosted several previous ND players ... team won league title (22-6), posted 39-10 overall record and placed 2nd at regional tournament before reaching final six at annual National Baseball Congress World Series in Wichita ... led team in stolen bases (24-of-27) while ranking 2nd in RBI (38) and 3rd in batting (.337, 57-for-169), HRs (5), slugging (.527) and on-base (.413), plus 42 R, 5 3B, 7 2B, 20 BB and .939 fielding (4 Es) on squad that owned .299 team batting avg. and 42-12 final record.

Cody Rizzo (Hays Larks, Jayhawk League) – summer cut short by foot injury (7 GP, .174, 4-for-23, 4 R, 2 2B, 2 RBI, BB, 1-1 SB).

Greg Lopez (Delaware Cows, Great Lakes League) – hit .268 (22-for-82) as infield on squad with .296 team batting avg. and 26-15 final record (30 GP, 13 R, 4 2B, 6 RBI, 5 BB, 1-1 SB, .337 OB, .317 slugging).

Ryan Doherty (Delaware Cows, Great Lakes League) – dominant closer, allowing just one earned run for a 0.46 ERA while racking up 28 Ks in 19.2 IP (8 GP/1 GS, 3 saves, 10 H, 5 BB, 1 HB, 1 WP, 2.75 team ERA).

Brennan Grogan (Delaware Cows, Great Lakes League) – saw his summer cut short by hamstring injury (4 GP, 2-for-7, 2-2 SB).

Matt Edwards (Waynesboro Generals, Shenedoah League) – hit .300 in second half of summer to raise batting avg. to .207, while playing 3B, SS and 1B (28 GP/27 GS, 19-for-92, 7 R, 3 2B, 3 RBI, .239 slugging, 9 BB, .291 OB, .909 fielding, 6 Es) ... injury-riddled team finished 13-27, with .217 team batting avg.

Scott Bickford (Waynesboro Generals, Shenedoah League) – posted 3.00 ERA in 12 relief appearances (1-0, 18 IP, 16 H, 5 BB, 16 Ks, .222, 2 WP, 2 HB).

Matt Bransfield (Colorado Sox, Rocky Mountain League) – hit cleanup while ranking among top hitters in entire National Baseball Congress, spanning 16 leagues across the nation ... his 9 regular-season HRs tied for the national lead among all NBC teams (he finished with 12 total HRs) ... also ranked 4th in the NBC regular-season rankings for RBI (36), 9th in batting (.381) and 8th in hits (32) ... hit 4-for-11 at the NBC World Series (2 HR, 4 RBI, 3 R, 2 BB) ... team finished 25-15 overall and 2nd in the RML (19-8).