

2005 NOTRE DAME BASEBALL

Week 5 – vs. Evansville and South Dakota State (in Evansville; March 17-19)

TAKING ON THE ACES – The Notre Dame baseball team (7-7) continues play in Evansville this weekend when the Irish face the host Aces on Friday night at Braun Stadium (6:00 CST) ... ND used a 7-run bottom of the 8th to rally past Northern Illinois on Thursday (10-6) ... junior LHP Tom Thornton is slated to start on the mound vs. Evansville while sophomore RHP Jeff Samardzija in the probable starter vs. South Dakota State ... Paul Mainieri, now in his 11th season at ND and 23rd overall as a college head coach, heads into the Evansville game with a **788-458-2** career record that includes a **457-179-1** record **with the Irish**.

TOM THORNTON BY THE NUMBERS

Thornton's 2005 Game-By-Game Stats

Date	Opponent	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	2B	3B	HR	WP	BK	HBP	DP
Feb. 19	at Central Florida (1-2)	5.0	5	1	1	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feb. 26	vs. Dayton, in Mesa (W, 10-2)	6.0	6	2	2	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
March 5	vs. Texas A&M, in Round Rock (L, 5-13)	5.1	9	7	7	1	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
March 11	vs. Oral Roberts, in San Antonio (L, 8-15)	5.0	8	5	5	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Totals (1-2, 6.33 ERA)		21.1	28	15	15	8	8	7	0	1	0	0	1	0

Thornton's Career Stats

Year	ERA	W-L	GP	GS	CG	SHO/CBO	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	2B	3B	HR	BF	B/Avg	WP	HBP
2003....	1.81	5-1	15	8	0	0/0	0	54.2	54	18	11	14	29	15	0	0	0	.269	3	6
2004....	3.88	9-2	16	15	1	1/0	0	99.2	95	53	43	24	77	19	0	8	0	.251	4	8
2005....	6.33	1-2	4	4	0	0/0	0	21.1	28	15	15	8	8	7	0	1	101	.326	0	1
TOTAL...	3.54	15-5	35	27	1	1/0	0	175.2	177	86	69	46	114	41	0	9		.266	7	15

Situationally Speaking – Tom Thornton has struggled vs. leadoff batters this season (allowing 55% to reach base, or nearly 5 per 9 IP) and opponents are batting .300 vs. him with runners on base ... Tall Tom has been toughest with 2 outs in the '05 seson, allowing just .200 opp. batting with 2 outs ... Thornton's 9-inning averages in 2005 include 11.8 hits and 3.4 walks allowed, 3.4 strikeouts and 10.6 groundouts.

TRENDY

Steve Andres – batting 6-for-15 in current 4-game hitting streak (4 RBI, 5 R)

Matt Edwards – has hits in 10 of past 11 games

Brett Lilley – looking to end 3-for-16 slump over past 5 games

Alex Nettey – hit 7-for-12 in the past three games to take over team batting lead

SERIES NOTES – Notre Dame leads the all-time series vs. its old MCC rival Evansville, 21-9 ... the only previous meeting in the Paul Mainieri era (since '95) was a 6-1 win for the Irish over the Aces at the 1998 Diamond Classic ... that tournament (which included six different teams from the state of Indiana) was played at Evansville's Bosse Field, where the movie "A League of Their Own" was filmed.

JACKRABBITS SET TO BECOME ND's 285th ALL-TIME OPPONENT – South Dakota State is set to become the 285th all-time opponent in 113 seasons of Notre Dame baseball history ... ND went 14-1 in in previous 15 games vs. first-time opponents (loss at Jacksonville in '03), including the 18-3 win over Florida A&M to open the 2005 season.

FRIEND OR FOE? – ND junior CF Alex Nettey is a former teammate of three Evansville playes: Adam Rogers and Mitch Prout (with the Bluff City Bombers) and 1B Eric Lis (with White Sox Prospects Development Team) ... Lis was slotted 106th on the Baseball America preseason list of the nation's top college prospects for the '05 draft ... ND sophomore LHP/DH Mike Dury and Evansville's Michael Beaven were teammates last season on the Madison Mallards.

STILL GOING – The Irish have extended the program's second-longest scoring streak to 162 games, trailing only a 231-game scoring streak from 1999-2002.

ALAMO CITY IRISH BASEBALL CLASSIC ALL-TOURNAMENT PICKS – ND's three all-tournament picks at the Alamo City Irish baseball classic included: junior LF/DH Steve Andres (.500, 5-for-10, 4 RBI, 4 R, 2 HR, 3 BB, 2 Ks), junior CF Alex Nettey (.385, 5-for-13, 2 RBI, 2 R, 2B, 3 BB, HBP, 1-2 SB) and freshman 3B Ross Brezovsky (.357, 5-for-14, 3 R, 3B, 2 Ks, E) ... the only other ND player who hit above .290 in the tournament was sophomore C Sean Gaston (.333, 5-for-15, 3 RBI, 3 R, 2B, HBP, K, SAC) ... the Irish hit .288 in the four games (30 R, .439 slugging pct., 5 HR, 3B, 3 2B, 18 BB, 4 HBP, 20 Ks, .385 on-base pct., 3-4 SB, .974 fielding, 4 Es, 26 LOB) while the ND staff had an 8.00 ERA in the ACIBC (36 IP, 55 H/.367, 17 BB, 21 Ks, 3 WP, 7 HB) ... the Irish now are 2-3 in the all-time series vs. Texas-San Antonio, 3-1 vs. Southwest Missouri State and 3-10 vs. Oral Roberts.

GREAT ALAMO MEMORIES – Junior LF/DH Steve Andres, who headed to San Antonio earlier this week mired in a 1-for-21 slump, has been an all-tournament pick at the past two Alamo City Irish Baseball Classics, batting a combined .478 (11-for-23) in the '04 and '05 ABIBCs, plus 8 RBI, 7 runs, a .913 slugging pct. (3 HR, 2B), a .556 on-base pct. (4 BB), a 1.469 OPS (combined OB and slugging) and just 2 strikeouts ... Andres has left the park on 3 of his 7 hits this season.

SPRING BREAK STATS – The Irish hit .296 in the six games over the break, scoring 40 runs (6.7/gm) with a .409 slugging pct. (5 HR, 3B, 6 2B), .402 on-base (29 BB, 9 HBP), 31 Ks, 3 sac. bunts, 3-of-5 SBs and .969 fielding (7 Es) ... top hitters on the Texas swing included senior 1B/3B Matt Edwards (.391, 9-for-23, 10 RBI, 6 R, 2 HR, 2 2B, .739 slug, 4 BB, K, .464 OB, 1.203 OPS, SF, 3 Es), freshman 2B Brett Lilley (.368, 7-for-19, 2 RBI, 6 R, 4 BB, 5 HBP, 4 Ks, SAC, .571 OB), junior CF Alex Nettey (.353, 6-for-17, 2 RBI, 2 R, 2B, 3 BB, HBP, K, 1-2 SB), junior OF Craig Cooper (.333, 8-for-24, 5 RBI, 4 R, 2B, 4 BB, 2 Ks, SB) and junior LF/DH Steve Andres (.333, 6-for-18, 5 RBI, 6 R, 2 HR, .667 slug, 5 BB, 3 Ks, .478 OB, 1.145 OPS) ... the ND pitchers posted a 9.00 staff ERA over the break, with 86 hits allowed (.368 opp. avg.), 28 BB, 30 Ks, 10 HB and 4 WP in 54 IP (plus 8 unearned runs).

NEW-LOOK LINEUP – ND has played most of the season without junior DH and 2004 RBI leader Matt Bransfield (broken hand in '05 opener), meaning that the typical 2005 batting order has included just five returning starters (junior OFs Steve Andres, Craig Cooper and Cody Rizzo, senior 1B Matt Edwards and junior SS Greg Lopez) ... newcomers to the everyday lineup have more than held their own, as freshman 2B Brett Lilley (.357), junior CF Alex Nettey (.355) and freshman 3B Ross Brezovsky (.353) headed to the Evansville trip ranked 2-4 on the team batting charts while sophomore C Sean Gaston was 6th on the team with a .298 batting avg. (prior to the NIU game).

FIRST-INNING FOCUS – Recent seasons have seen the Irish struggle with 1st-inning run production in the early games but ND now has totaled 14 runs in the 1st inning of 14 games this season ... the Irish have scored more runs in only the 6th (17) and 8th (19) innings this season.

MIDDLE-INNING MIGRANES – Half of the runs allowed by the ND pitching staff (52 of 104) have come in the 5th (15), 6th (24) and 7th (13) innings ... the Irish are averaging 3.7 runs allowed per game in the 5th-7th innings, compared to an average of just 2.1 in the first four innings (29) and only 1.6 (23) from the 8th inning on ... the final two games in San Antonio saw ORU and SMS combine for 21 runs in the 5th-7th.

HBP HIGHWAY ROLLS ON – Notre Dame remains on pace for a record team hit-by-pitch total, with 36 HBPs in the first 13 game (that would factor out to 144 in the 56-game regular season, well ahead of the team record of 106/5th in NCAA history set in '04) ... freshman 2B Brett Lilley has racked up 11 HBPs, just five shy of joining teammate Cody Rizzo (28 in '03, 21 in '04) as the only ND players with more than 15 HBPs in a season.

THROWN TO THE FIRE – The Notre Dame pitching staff is looking to put the first month of the season quickly behind it, with several veterans and newcomers expected to play key roles the rest of the way ... the Irish lost three key pitchers from the '04 staff that finished 5th in the nation with a 3.36 team ERA (ace junior starters Grant Johnson and Chris Niesel signed with the Cubs and Indians, respectively, while top lefthanded reliever Joe Thaman moved on due to graduation) ... two pitchers who have been highly-rated prospects, senior John Axford and Jeff Manship, would have been natural replacements for Johnson and Niesel but each is being eased back slowly after undergoing 2004 reconstructive elbow surgery (they have combined to throw just 2.1 innings this season) ... one result of Axford and Manship's limited production has been the quick use of four freshman pitchers – LHPs Wade Korpi and David Gruener and RHPs Joey Williamson and Tony Langford – who have combined to log 37.1 innings (29% of the team's 127 IP) with mixed results.