



Sports Information Office
University of Notre Dame
112 Joyce Center
Notre Dame, IN 46556
www.und.com
574-631-7516
574-631-7941 FAX

2003 University of Notre Dame Softball

Contact: Alan Wasielewski • Wasielewski.3@nd.edu • 574-631-7516

University of South Florida/Wilson Tournament Tampa, Fla. • USF Softball Field

- #17 Notre Dame at South Florida, Saturday, Feb. 15, 12 noon
- #17 Notre Dame vs. Kent State, Saturday, Feb. 15, 6 p.m.
- #17 Notre Dame vs. Jacksonville, Sunday, Feb. 16, 10 a.m.
- #17 Notre Dame vs. Hofstra, Sunday, Feb. 16, 12 noon
- #17 Notre Dame vs. Rhode Island, Monday, Feb. 17, 10 a.m.

Notre Dame set to begin the 2003 softball season in Tampa, Fla.:
The University of Notre Dame softball team will begin the 2003 season this weekend at the USF/Wilson Tournament in Tampa, Fla. The tournament features the host team, South Florida, along with Kent State, Jacksonville, Hofstra and Rhode Island.

The two Florida teams, Jacksonville and USF, have already seen action this season. South Florida is off to a good start, bringing a 7-4 record into the tournament. Courtney Lewellen has been the main offensive force thus far for the Bulls, with nine RBI in 11 games.

Jacksonville is competing in its first season of softball. The Dolphins are 1-6 on the young season and boast a victory over Arkansas. Jill Bandhauer leads the team with six RBI and one home run.

Notre Dame history vs. USF/Wilson Tournament opponents:

South Florida: 3-3, away 2-1, neutral 1-2; last meeting - ND 5, USF 3 (2002 Holiday Inn Invitational, Tampa, Fla.)

Kent State: 1-0, neutral 1-0; last meeting - ND 12, KSU 4 (2000 Purdue Invitational, West Lafayette, Ind.)

Jacksonville: first meeting

Hofstra: 1-0, neutral 1-0; last meeting - ND 8, Hofstra 1 (2001 Holiday Inn Invitational, Tampa, Fla.)

Rhode Island: 4-0, neutral 4-0; last meeting - ND 1, Rhode Island 0 (9) (game played in Tampa, Fla., 1992)

Preseason home away from home: The Irish have made a number of early-season trips to South Florida for several tournaments, making six appearances in Tampa since 1993. Notre Dame has played well, posting a 21-13 (.618) record in all games played in Tampa. The Irish last appeared at a South Florida tournament in 2001, when Notre Dame swept through the tournament with victories over Maryland, South Florida, #4 Washington, Hofstra and #18 South Carolina.

Notre Dame head coach Deanna Gumpf ready for her second season: Irish head coach Deanna Gumpf led her team to a 44-17 record in 2002 - her first season as the program's leader. A former assistant at Notre Dame and player at Nebraska ('92), Gumpf and her staff landed the BIG EAST Conference Coaching Staff of the Year award and shared the NFCA Mideast Region Coaching Staff of the Year award with Wisconsin last season.

Among Notre Dame's many accomplishments in 2002, the Irish advanced to the final day of competition at the NCAA regionals for the second-consecutive season, won the BIG EAST regular-season and tournament titles and set school records for home runs (54) and fielding percentage (.971).

Irish team strength lies in veteran infield: There is no secret where the Notre Dame team strength lies this season. Three-year starters Andrea Loman (third base), Andria Bledsoe (short stop) and Alexis Madrid (second base) return to lead the team this season on offense, defense and as team tri-captains.

All three players have key roles in Notre Dame's offensive numbers

2003 SCHEDULE (0-0)

FEBRUARY

USF/Wilson Tournament (Tampa, Fla.)

15	Sat.	at South Florida	12 p.m.
15	Sat.	vs. Kent State	6 p.m.
16	Sun.	vs. Jacksonville	10 a.m.
16	Sun.	vs. Hofstra	12 p.m.
17	Mond.	vs. Rhode Island	10 a.m.

2003 NFCA Leadoff Classic (Columbus, Ga.)

21	Fri.	vs. #3 California	5 p.m.
21	Fri.	vs. Illinois State	7:30 p.m.
22	Sat.	vs. #22 Alabama	12:30 p.m.
22	Sat.	Bracket Play	5 p.m.

Louisiana Classic (Lafayette, La.)

28	Fri.	vs. Northwestern State	11:45 a.m.
28	Fri.	vs. Louisiana-Lafayette	6:30 p.m.

MARCH

1	Sat.	vs. McNeese State	4:15 p.m.
1	Sat.	vs. Louisiana-Lafayette	6:30 p.m.
2	Sun.	vs. Northwestern State	11 a.m.
9	Sun.	at CS Northridge (DH)	12 p.m.

2003 Kia Klassic (Fullerton, Calif.)

13	Thurs.	vs. #15 Fresno State	3 p.m.
13	Thurs.	vs. #4 Nebraska	7 p.m.
14	Fri.	vs. DePaul	11 a.m.
14	Fri.	Championship play	5 p.m.
23	Sun.	at W. Michigan (DH)	12 p.m.
26	Wed.	Northwestern (DH)	3 p.m.
29	Sat.	at Pittsburgh (DH)*	11 a.m.
30	Sun.	at Virginia Tech (DH)*	12 p.m.

APRIL

1	Tues.	at Purdue (DH)	2 p.m.
3	Thurs.	Loyola (Chicago) (DH)	4 p.m.
5	Sat.	at Providence (DH)*	11 a.m.
11	Fri.	St. John's (DH)*	4 p.m.
13	Sun.	Seton Hall (DH)*	11 a.m.
15	Tues.	at #4 Nebraska (DH)	3 p.m.
17	Thurs.	IPFW (DH)	4 p.m.
19	Sat.	at Syracuse (DH)*	11 a.m.
23	Wed.	Valparaiso (DH)	4 p.m.
24	Thurs.	at Illinois-Chicago	6 p.m.
26	Sat.	at Boston College (DH)*	11 a.m.
27	Sun.	at Connecticut (DH)*	11 a.m.
29	Tues.	at #11 DePaul (DH)	4 p.m.

MAY

2	Fri.	Villanova (DH)*	4 p.m.
4	Sun.	Rutgers (DH)*	11 a.m.

2003 BIG EAST Championship (Salem, Va.)

8	Thurs.	First Round	TBA
9	Fri.	Second Round	TBA
10	Sat.	Play continues	TBA
14	Wed.	NCAA Regionals	TBA
20	Tues.	College World Series	TBA

* - indicates BIG EAST Conference game
bold indicates home game • all home games played at Ivy Field on the east side of campus

2003 University of Notre Dame Softball Roster

No.	Name	Year	Pos.	Ht.	B/T	Hometown (High School)	Key Stats from '02
1	Steffany Stenglein*	So.	RHP	5-10	R/R	Huntington Beach, CA (Marina)	27-12, 1.93 ERA
4	Carrie Wisen*	So.	RHP	5-7	R/R	Fullerton, CA (Sonora)	116 Ks, 2.00 ERA
7	Jessica Sharron*	Sr.	RHP	5-8	R/R	Agoura Hills, CA (Thousand Oaks)	11.0 IP, 1 save
8	Liz Hartmann*	So.	OF	5-9	R/R	Novato, CA (San Marin)	Frosh record 7 HR
9	Chantal DeAlcuaz	Jr.	C	5-9	R/R	Modesto, CA (Central Catholic)	15 GP
10	Alexis Madrid***(c)	Sr.	2B	5-1	L/R	Temecula, CA (Temecula)	10-12 in SB
14	Nicole deFau**	Jr.	IF/OF	5-9	R/R	Southington, CT (Southington)	5-7 SB, 1 HR
16	Mallorie Lenn	Fr.	C	5-8	R/R	Garden Grove, CA (Pacifica)	
18	Andria Bledsoe*** (c)	Sr.	SS	5-7	R/R	Higley, AZ (Highland)	.315 avg, 43 RBI
21	Megan Ciolli*	So.	OF	5-9	L/R	Terre Haute, IN (North Vigo)	.345 avg, 67 hits
22	Sara Schoonaert	Fr.	IF/OF	5-5	R/R	Houston, TX (Clear Lake)	
25	Lisa Mattison***	Sr.	1B/DP	5-10	R/R	Granger, IN (Penn)	.325 avg, 27 RBI
32	Heather Booth	Fr.	RHP	5-10	R/R	Riverside, CA (MLK)	
33	Andrea Loman*** (c)	Sr.	3B	5-10	R/R	Riverside, CA (Poly)	.377 avg, 12 HR
44	Kellie Middleton	Fr.	OF	5-6	R/R	Norcross, GA (Marist)	
77	Meagan Ruthrauff	Fr.	IF/OF	5-10	R/R	La Mirada, CA (La Serna)	

* - indicates monograms won

(c) - 2003 team captain

Staff:

Head Coach: Deanna Gumpf (Nebraska '91)

(44-17, second year at Notre Dame)

Assistant Coach: Charmelle Green (Utah '92)

Assistant Coach: Kris Ganefff (Notre Dame '99)

Volunteer Assistant Coach: Bill Roggeman (Ball State '81)

Team Senior Manager: Nichole Boerson (Notre Dame '03)

Team Trainer: Chantal Porter (Iowa State '94)

Strength and Conditioning Coach: Heather Mason (Cincinnati '95)

Sports Information Director: Alan Wasielewski (Notre Dame '00)

and defensive prowess. The Irish set a team record for fielding percentage in 2002 (.971) and committed just 50 errors on 1,678 chances. Notre Dame also hit a team-record 54 home runs in '02.

Loman excels on offense and defense and is widely regarded as one of the best third basemen in the country.

The Riverside, Calif., native led the team with a .377 average last season, putting up 12 home runs, 43 RBI and 66 hits. She ranks in the top five all-time in Notre Dame history for fielding percentage.

Bledsoe is among the Irish leaders on offense and defense as well. The Higley, Ariz., native drove in 43 runs last year on 56 hits. She also hit a career-best seven home runs and was steady on defense, compiling a .970 fielding percentage.

Madrid dropped from hitting over .300 in 2001 to a .225 clip last season. She did steal 10 bases (third-best on

the team) and contribute 95 assists on defense.

Notre Dame's infield also features two-time first-team all-BIG EAST selection Lisa Mattison at first base. Mattison hit .325 in '02 with 27 RBI and four home runs.

Pitching staff looks for improvement with returning veterans and one talented rookie: The Notre Dame pitching staff was thrust into a tough position last season. The loss of two All-Americans led to two freshman, Steffany Stenglein and Carrie Wisen, having to take over the starting pitching duties.

Both rookie struggled early, but eventually settled down into one of the top duos in the BIG EAST Conference.

Stenglein saw the bulk of the innings, setting school season records for innings pitched (250.2) and appearances (54). She also ended up matching Jennifer Sharron's 2001 season

record with 27 victories.

Stenglein earned first-team all-BIG EAST honors a year ago and would end up tossing a perfect game against future conference tournament runner-up Virginia Tech.

Wisen logged 140.0 innings in 2002 and compiled a 2.00 ERA. She appeared in 44 games and posted 116 strikeouts.

Current senior Jessica Sharron saw spot duty as a reliever last year, collecting one save and striking out nine in 11 innings.

This season, all three pitchers return and add freshman Heather Booth into the rotation. Booth was one of the most successful pitchers in the CIF league last year and is ready to contribute as both a starter and reliever for the Irish in 2003.

California girls: Just a quick glance at the 2003 Notre Dame softball roster can beg the question, is the ND campus located on the west coast?

In all, 10 Irish players call California home - that is over 50% of the Irish roster. Add in head coach Deanna Gumpf (La Palma) and the Notre Dame softball team has a distinctive Golden State flavor.

The California girls: Steffany Stenglein (Huntington Beach), Carrie Wisen (Fullerton), Jessica Sharron (Agoura Hills), Liz Hartmann (Novato), Chantal DeAlcuaz (Modesto), Alexis Madrid (Temecula), Mallorie Lenn (Gar-

**NOTRE DAME
PROBABLE STARTERS**

C: Mallorie Lenn, Fr., R/R
 1B: Lisa Mattison, Sr., R/R
 or Meagan Ruthrauff, Fr., R/R
 2B: Alexis Madrid, Sr., L/R
 SS: Andria Bledsoe, Sr., R/R
 3B: Andrea Loman, Sr., R/R
 OF: Megan Ciolli, So., L/R
 OF: Kellie Middleton, Fr., R/R
 OF: Liz Hartmann, So. R/R
 or Nicole deFau, Jr., R/R
 P: Steffany Stenglein, So., R/R
 or Carrie Wisen, So., R/R
 or Heather Booth, Fr., R/R

**NOTRE DAME
SPORTS INFORMATION**

Publicity for Notre Dame softball is coordinated by sports information publicity assistant Alan Wasielewski.

Photographs, statistics and feature ideas are available by contacting Wasielewski at (574) 631-7516 or via e-mail at Wasielewski.3@nd.edu.

Requests to interview student-athletes and coaches must be arranged through the SID office and should be made at least 24 hours in advance. Credentials for home games can be obtained by calling Wasielewski.

Statistics, results and weekly releases (typically released on Wednesday of each week of the season) also are readily available on Notre Dame's official athletic site, www.und.com.

If you wish to be added to the Notre Dame softball weekly release distribution list, please send an e-mail to: Wasielewski.3@nd.edu

den Grove), Heather Booth (Riverside), Andrea Loman (Riverside) and Meagan Ruthrauff (La Mirada).

Notre Dame preseason favorite to win the BIG EAST Conference: The BIG EAST Conference has released its 2002 preseason softball poll and the University of Notre Dame softball team ended up as the top choice, as voted on by the league's coaches, to win the 2003 league championship. The Irish received 99 points in the conference's preseason release, ahead of Syracuse in second place (85) and Villanova (75) in third. Notre Dame received nine first-place votes, while Villanova and Virginia Tech each received one.

2002 BIG EAST

Preseason Softball Poll

Rank, team, (first place votes), points, '02 record

1. Notre Dame (9), 99 pts., 44-17
2. Syracuse, 85 pts., 25-21
3. Villanova (1), 75 pts., 45-15
4. Virginia Tech (1), 71 pts., 42-18
5. Seton Hall, 69 pts., 29-17
6. Boston College, 63 pts., 26-26
7. St. John's, 36 pts., 23-30-1
8. Rutgers, 35 pts., 22-25
9. Connecticut, 31 pts., 5-15
10. Pittsburgh, 30 pts., 21-33
11. Providence, 11 pts., 5-15

Notre Dame ranked 17th in preseason national poll: The University of Notre Dame softball team, which returns six starting positional players and two starting pitchers from the 2002 squad, has been ranked 17th in the *USA Today*/National Fastpitch Coaches Association preseason top 25. It is the second-straight year the Irish have been ranked in the preseason top 20, as Notre Dame debuted at 14th last year and finished the year ranked 19th in the nation.

In keeping with tradition, Notre Dame will face a tough schedule this season according to the preseason top 25. The Irish are scheduled to face #3 California, #4 Nebraska (at least three times), #11 DePaul (at least three times), #15 Fresno State, #22 Alabama and Louisiana-Lafayette and Virginia Tech – both of whom also received votes in the poll.

**2003 USA TODAY/NFCA
PRESEASON TOP 25 (1-29-03)**

School	2002 Record	Pts.	
LW			
1. UCLA (18)	55-9	543	5
2. Arizona (2)	55-12	515	2
3. California (2)	56-19	435	1
t-4. Michigan	50-11	403	7
t-4. Nebraska	50-14	403	6
6. Washington	46-18	395	14
7. LSU	56-11	373	9
8. Oklahoma	49-16	369	8
9. Florida State	55-20	344	4
10. CS Fullerton	53-13	341	10
11. DePaul	50-11	336	11
12. Texas	50-13	335	16
13. Arizona State	46-20	321	3
14. Stanford	44-20	315	15
15. Fresno State	50-20	241	17
16. Ohio State	55-14	216	13
t-17. NOTRE DAME	44-17	160	19
t-17. Georgia	59-17	160	22
19. Georgia Tech	52-18	152	18
20. South Carolina	46-20	123	12
21. Pacific	43-17	92	20
22. Alabama	46-19	87	NR
23. Oregon State	40-25	80	24
24. Texas A&M	40-18	78	21
25. Massachusetts	53-13	68	23

Others receiving votes: Florida Atlantic (63), Baylor (60), Iowa (52), Louisiana-Lafayette (29), Virginia Tech (3).

Mallorie Lenn wins medal with the U.S. Junior National team: Freshman Mallorie Lenn landed a spot on the U.S. Junior National team that eventually won the First Junior Women's Pan American Championship in Hermosillo, Mexico.

Lenn, from Garden Grove, Calif., was one of the starting catchers on the U.S. team that did not surrender a single run during the tournament. The team was potent on offense as well, dispatching Netherlands Antilles 21-0, Guatemala 20-0 and Jamaica 20-0.

The U.S.'s main competition in the tournament was Canada, and in the first match up during round-robin play Lenn provided the game-winning RBI in her team's 1-0 victory. Lenn also served as the catcher for the gold-medal game against Canada (a 2-0 U.S. victory).

The victory provided the USA with a berth in the 2003 International Softball Federation Junior Women's World Championships in Nanjin, China, during the summer of 2003.

Home run power: Notre Dame exploded for a team record 54 home runs during the 2002 season, shattering the previous record of 36 from 2000. Jarrah Myers ended up with a single-season record 13 round trippers, followed by Andrea Loman with 12 and Andria Bledsoe and Liz Hartmann with seven. Hartmann's seven dingers are the most ever by a freshman at Notre Dame. In all, 10 different Irish players hit at least one home run during the 2002 season.

All-Time Record: Entering the 2003 season, Notre Dame softball has posted 556 wins in 14 seasons (almost 40 wins per season). The Irish have won 67% of their games and have never posted a losing season.

Road Warriors: February isn't the best time to play softball in Northern Indiana, so the Notre Dame softball team hits the road exclusively during the first two months of the season to take on some of the best teams in the nation. In just the last five years, Notre Dame has visited Arizona, Georgia, California, Texas, Florida, Arkansas, Tennessee, Nevada, Hawaii and Oklahoma in early-season tournament action. This year, the Irish will head to Tampa, Fla., for the USF/Wilson Tournament, Columbus, Ga., for the NFCA Leadoff Classic, Lafayette, Louisiana, for a tournament hosted by the Lady Cajuns and Southern California for the Kia Klassic.

Loman among the best at her position: Already known as one of the best in the Midwest prior to the 2002 season, senior Andrea Loman finally earned national acclaim for her spectacular play at the end of Notre Dame's '02 campaign. Loman earned third-team NFCA/Louisville Slugger All-American accolades in addition to being named the BIG EAST Championship Most Outstanding Player.

Loman excels both offensively and defensively for Notre Dame, driving in runs and taking away many players ability to drop a bunt down the third-base line. Loman's .962 fielding percentage for the '02 season is impressive by itself (219 chances) but six of her eight errors were committed after she broke a finger on her throwing hand in a doubleheader at Seton Hall. Her career fielding percentage stands at .981 entering the 2003 season.

Not just a power hitter, Loman is able to hit for average (.377 in '02) and steal bases when she gets on (a team-high 16 stolen bases last season).

Irish will not back down from the best in the country: In what had become an annual tradition for the Notre Dame softball team, the Irish will spend the first two month of the season crisscrossing the country and taking on the best teams in the nation.

Notre Dame will begin the year this weekend at the USF/Wilson Tournament in Tampa, Fla., facing traditional power South Florida and several NCAA east regional teams, including Hofstra and Rhode Island.

The next weekend finds Notre Dame at the challenging NFCA Leadoff Classic

NOTRE DAME STATISTICAL LEADERS

<u>Batting Average</u>	
Andrea Loman377
Jarrah Myers370
Megan Ciolli345
<u>Hits</u>	
Megan Ciolli	67
Jenny Kriech	67
Andrea Loman	66
Jarrah Myers	61
<u>Doubles</u>	
Jenny Kriech	16
Andria Bledsoe	11
Andrea Loman	10
<u>Triples</u>	
Megan Ciolli	5
Three with	1
<u>Home Runs</u>	
Jarrah Myers	13
Andrea Loman	12
Andria Bledsoe	7
Liz Hartmann	7
<u>RBI</u>	
Jarrah Myers	49
Andrea Loman	43
Andria Bledsoe	43
<u>Slugging Percentage</u>	
Jarrah Myers661
Andrea Loman651
Andria Bledsoe506
<u>On Base Percentage</u>	
Jarrah Myers483
Andrea Loman461
Lisa Mattison402
<u>Stolen Bases</u>	
Andrea Loman	16
Jarrah Myers	14
Megan Ciolli	11
PITCHING	
<u>ERA</u>	
Jessica Sharron	1.27
Steffany Stenglein	1.93
Carrie Wisen	2.00
<u>Strikeouts</u>	
Steffany Stenglein	216
Carrie Wisen	116
Jessica Sharron	9
<u>Innings Pitched</u>	
Steffany Stenglein	250.2
Carrie Wisen	140.0
Jessica Sharron	11.0

NOTRE DAME GAME HIGHS

- Runs
- Hits
- RBI
- Doubles
- Home Runs
- Total Bases
- Stolen Bases
- Innings Pitched
- Strikeouts

TEAM GAME HIGHS

- Runs
- Hits
- RBI
- Doubles
- Home Runs
- Total Bases
- Stolen Bases
- Innings Pitched
- Strikeouts

taking on defending national champion California, Illinois State and Alabama. The Irish head to the Bayou the next weekend for a tournament at Louisiana-Lafayette before going west to the 2003 Kia Klassic in Fullerton, Calif. Notre Dame will face Fresno State, Nebraska and DePaul at the Kia this year. Notre Dame's regular-season schedule also features the Cornhuskers and Blue Demons in late April.

2003 Season Preview: The 2003 University of Notre Dame softball team returns six position starters and two starting pitchers from the 2002 edition of the Fighting Irish. That team rallied back from an 8-12 start to win the BIG EAST Championship and finish one game away from every college softball team's ultimate goal - the Women's College World Series in Oklahoma City, Okla..

Head coach Deanna Gumpf, entering her second full season, knows what the Irish will need to do in 2003 to be handed those coveted plane tickets to Hall of Fame Stadium as a regional champion.

"We need to focus on the strengths of our team," Gumpf says.

"The focus should be on us and to make sure that we are consistent. We have to take care of business every day."

The Irish have a number of strengths this year, making it difficult to pick out just one that stands above the rest. Almost every player in the lineup can hit the ball out of the park at any time, demonstrated by the team record 54 home runs (hit by 10 different players) in 2002. Notre Dame can defend the infield and outfield, setting a school-record for fielding percentage last year (.971) and contributing 15 outfield assists. The pitching staff, knocked around a bit during the pre-season a year ago, returns with a wealth of experience and a talented rookie to throw into the mix. Put it all together and the Irish will be a team to reckon with this year.

"I think our biggest strength is our five seniors, their experience and their goals for this team," Gumpf says.

BIG EAST STANDINGS (2-12)

<u>Team</u>	<u>BE Record</u>	<u>Overall</u>
Boston College	0-0	1-3
NOTRE DAME	0-0	0-0
Syracuse	0-0	0-0
Virginia Tech	0-0	0-0
Connecticut	0-0	0-0
Providence	0-0	0-0
Rutgers	0-0	0-0
Seton Hall	0-0	0-0
Villanova	0-0	0-0
Pittsburgh	0-0	0-0
St. John's	0-0	0-0

Note: As voted by the head softball coaches, the BIG EAST softball standings will now be determined by a 2/1 points system. Two points will be awarded for a conference win, one point for a tie and no points for a loss. Conference competition begins the weekend of March 23-24.

Player of the Week Awards:

The BIG EAST Conference will begin Player/Rookie of the Week awards on Feb 17.

"They are prepared to get our team to where we want to be."

The Notre Dame senior class, short-stop Andria Bledsoe, third base Andrea Loman, second base Alexis Madrid, first base Lisa Mattison and pitcher Jessica Sharron, represent over 700 games played in their careers. Bledsoe, Loman and Madrid have been starters since they stepped on campus (and were voted as team captains by their teammates for the 2003 season), while Mattison has been a starter at first base or DP for the past two years. It is a group of players loaded with talent, experience and desire.

Loman, who earned third-team All-America honors last season, has established herself as one of the top players in the country during her career. She was at first base for her freshman and sophomore seasons before shifting across the diamond to dominate at third base.

"I believe that Andrea is the best third base in the country," Gumpf says. **season preview cont. on p. 6**

2003 Game Results - Winning RBI/Hit - Winning Run

Date	Opposing Team	Score	Outcome	R/H/E - R/H/E	Pitcher of Record	GW H/RBI	GW Run
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“Her strengths are unbelievable. She puts her teammates and coaches in awe daily with what she can do on the field. The best thing about Andrea this year is that she has taken on a great leadership role with the team and I think that will take her game to even greater heights. She is an amazing player.”

Amazing might be an understatement for a player that can dominate both offensively and defensively. Loman hit .377 in '02, piling up 66 hits, 12 home runs and 43 RBI. She is a beast on the base paths (42 career stolen bases, including 16-18 last year) and stellar in the field. Despite playing the second half of the season with a broken finger on her throwing hand, Loman posted a .962 fielding percentage at one of the most challenging positions on the field. Six of her eight errors were committed with the fractured finger, but that did not keep her from taking home the BIG EAST Championship Most Outstanding Player award last year. The Riverside, Calif., native takes pride in her offense and defense and has shown the ability to take away any sacrifice bunt attempted down the third-base line.

Gumpf also begins the 2003 season with a far different pitching staff than she had just a year ago. Entering the '02 season, Steffany Stenglein and Carrie Wisen were two freshman pitchers thrown to the wolves as Notre Dame traditionally plays a very strong early-season schedule. Both rookies battled through their learning phase to become highly effective at the end of the year. Gumpf expects even more in 2003.

“Our sophomore pitching will be a strength for us this season,” Gumpf says.

“After what they went through last year, they know exactly what to expect and they are ready to take on any team in the nation.”

Stenglein was a workhorse for Notre Dame last season, setting school records for appearances and innings pitched. She also matched the school mark for wins in a season with 27. She ended up with a 1.92 ERA, 216 strikeouts and 13 complete games (including a perfect game against eventual BIG EAST runner-up Virginia Tech). Most of Stenglein's best work came in the last half of the season when she was battling a painful muscle tear in her right leg.

“Steff is a tough girl,” Gumpf says.

“After last year, going through the challenges she had from March (when the injury occurred) to the end of the year just proved how tough she truly is. If she maintains the level she is at now, she will improve tremendously throughout the season.”

Stenglein will combine with sophomore Carrie Wisen, freshman Heather Booth and Sharron to give Gumpf unlimited pitching options entering each contest.

As for the team goals for the 2003 season, specific details are kept among the Irish players and coaches. Gumpf made no secret, however, about her ultimate goal every year when she was handed the reigns to the Notre Dame program a year ago. The Irish want to be playing in the College World Series.

“It goes back to our initial goal of recognizing the strengths of our team,” Gumpf says. “We need to depend on the strength of us and everything will take care of itself. We want to win the BIG EAST, get to the regionals, maintain our momentum, stay consistent and make it to the World Series.”

The World Series has been the team's goal for the last four years, but Gumpf just might have the right mix of veterans and talented underclassmen to make that goal a reality in 2003.

