

NOTRE DAME BASEBALL NCAA GAMEDAY NOTES - vs. CAL STATE FULLERTON (MAY 31, 2003)

Notre Dame heads into today's NCAA winner's bracket game vs. host Cal State Fullerton (the No. 7 national seed) looking for another strong outing from second team All-American (*Collegiate Baseball*) and 2003 BIG EAST Conference pitcher of the year **Chris Niesel**, (first outing in 15 days, did not pitch at BIG EAST Tournament due to a form of tendonitis in his throwing hand) ... CSF is expected to counter with freshman LHP **Ryan Schreppel** (1.90 ERA, 5-2, 42.2 IP, 34 Ks, 13 BB, .203 opp. batting) ... Niesel joins Nick Palihnich ('60) and Aaron Heilman ('98-'01) as the only ND pitchers ever to earn All-America (eight ND position players have done so) ... Niesel's BIG EAST dominance included a 7-0 record and 2.58 ERA in eight league starts, plus .247 opponent batting and an 8-to-1 K-to-walk ratio (49/6) in BIG EAST games ... he joined WVU's Zac Cline (9-2) as the only pitchers to post seven league wins while BC's Kevin Shephard and Chris Lambert (both 2.36) were the only full-time starters with better ERA's in conference play ... Niesel nearly averaged one strikeout per inning in BIG EAST play (49 in 52.1) while averaging just 1.03 walks per 9 IP in conference games (his 49 Ks were 4th-best in the league) ... in overall games, Niesel ranked 4th among BIG EAST pitchers with a 2.69 ERA (Shephard was the only starter better, at 2.44) while ranking 2nd in wins (9-1), 3rd in Ks (82), 6th in low opponent batting (.233) and 2nd in innings (90.1) ... ND has produced four of the last six BIG EAST pitchers of the year (Brad Lidge in '98, Aaron Heilman in '00, '01) ... Niesel and senior RHP Ryan Kalita (13-1, after win over Arizona) have combined for a 27-2 career record at ND ... ND is hitting .368 in five postseason games.

Chris Niesel – 2003 game-by-game (all starts, 14)

Date	Opponent	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	HR	WP	HB	GO	Score	W-L	ERA
2/21	vs. Dayton (@ASU)	6.0	6	4	4	2	1	0	1	0	10	10-9	–	6.00
2/28	vs. Nebraska (@M'dome)	4.0	9	6	6	1	2	1	0	0	6	1-7	L	9.00
3/8	vs Vanderbilt (@UNF)	8.0	3	1	0	0	9	0	1	2	10	3-1	–	5.00
3/13	*vs. E. Illinois (@UNF)	8.0	2	2	0	2	9	0	1	0	7	3-2	W	3.46
3/23	at Villanova	7.1	5	2	2	0	11	0	0	0	6	2-3	–	3.24
3/29	Georgetown	7.0	6	2	2	1	9	0	0	0	7	6-2	W	3.12
4/6	at St. John's	6.0	9	3	2	2	4	0	1	0	10	11-3	W	3.11
4/12	vs. Creighton (Ros. St.)	6.0	4	1	1	3	6	0	0	0	6	2-1	W	2.92
4/17	Pittsburgh	7.0	8	2	2	0	4	0	1	0	12	5-2	W	2.88
4/22	Ball State	6.0	7	1	1	1	6	0	0	0	6	1-3	–	2.76
4/27	Connecticut	7.0	6	3	3	1	7	0	0	0	5	6-3	W	2.86
5/3	*West Virginia	7.0	1	0	0	1	9	0	0	0	5	1-0	W	2.61
5/10	at Rutgers	6.0	6	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	6	2-0	W	2.43
5/16	at Virginia Tech	5.0	8	4	4	0	3	1	0	0	4	12-4	W	2.69
Totals		90.1	80	31	27	15	82	2	5	3	100		9-1	2.69

Niesel's Nine-Inning Averages: 8.0 hits, 1.5 walks, 8.2 Ks, 11.7 groundouts (6.2 IP per outing; 36.8 BF per 9 IP)

Situational Pitching: .217 opp. batting with runners on, .250 with 2 outs, 30% of leadoff batters reached (2.7 per 9 IP)

Chris Niesel – Career Stats

Year	ERA	W-L	GP/GS	CG	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	K	2B-3B-HR	BF/B/Avg	WP	HB
2002	3.36	4-0	14/11	0	2	72.1	68	33	27	18	62	17-0-7	307/.241	2	4
2003	2.69	9-1	14/14	3	0	90.1	80	42	27	15	82	14-2-2	369/.233	5	3
Totals	2.99	13-1	28/25	3	2	162.2	148	65	54	33	144	10-2-9	676/.237	7	7

NIESEL NOTES

- Has **won 31 of last 33** overall decisions, dating back to 13-0 record as a senior All-American at Aquinas High School (also 13-1 at ND, 3-1 in Cape Cod League and 2-0 in Blue-Gold fall intrasquad series).
- Tossed **near-no-hitter** vs. hot-hitting West Virginia (.330 team avg.) on May 3, 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).
- Since suffering the only loss of his ND career (Feb. 28 vs. Nebraska), has **dominated** in his **last 12** outings (9-0) to the tune of a 1.91 ERA, a .218 opp. batting avg. and a 6-to-1 K-to-walk ratio (79/13) in those 12 starts (he has 31 Ks/4 BB in the last 6 GP).
- One win away from becoming just third ND pitcher– and second in 95 years – to post single-season **win streak of 10-plus** decisions (Frank "Dreams" Scanlan won 10 straight in 1908 while Aaron Heilman posted 10 straight Ws in 2000 before going 15-0 in '01).
- Has allowed just **one run** (0.64 ERA), nine hits (.188 opp. avg.) and no walks in the **1st inning** this season (14 IP, 18 Ks).
- Has averaged nearly 20 outs per 9 IP via Ks (8.2) or groundouts (11.7).
- Owns a **5.5 season K-to-walk** ratio that would rank 5th in ND history ... his **4.46 career K-to-BB** ratio (144/33) is ahead of Alan Walania's ND record (4.00, from '90-'93) ... nearly **8-to-1 K/BB** in **last five** outings: 38 IP, 31 Ks, 4 BB.
- His season **walk average of 1.49/9 IP** would rank 6th in ND history while his **1.83 career walk avg.** is 3rd in the ND record book.
- Has **allowed just two home runs** in 90.1 innings (369 batters faced) this 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 regular-season series at Virginia Tech.
- His **82 Ks** are nine shy of the ND season top-10 list.
- 10th all-time ND pitcher with **multiple double-digit K games** in career (10 vs. So. Ill. in '02, 11 vs. Villanova in '03) and 5th to do so in the 9-year Mainieri era (the others are Brad Lidge, Tim Kalita, Aaron Heilman and Danny Tamayo) ... also owns five 9-K games in his ND career (four in '03) ... combines with John Axford (12 vs. WMU) as 10th pair of ND **teammates with 10-plus Ks** in same season.
- 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 **13-1 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.
- Had dominating **2002 postseason** with 2.05 ERA in five outings (four starts), plus 22 Ks, 7 BB and 23 hits allowed in 26.1 IP (he won the 3-1 clincher at top-ranked Florida State in the Super-Regional and had a strong CWS start vs. Rice).

NOTRE DAME OPENS NCAAS WITH STRONG ALL-AROUND EFFORT IN 13-5 WIN OVER ARIZONA

The Notre Dame baseball team – despite **starting five** position players who **never had played** in an **NCAA** Tournament game – opened the NCAA postseason on Friday in similar fashion to its BIG EAST Tournament opening win last week vs. West Virginia, as the Irish matched their **17-hit** assault from the WVU game while again receiving a strong start from a senior RHP (Ryan Kalita) and playing one of the team's best all-around defensive games of the year. It all added up to a 13-5 win for the third-seeded Irish over No. 2 seed Arizona, sending Notre Dame on to a matchup with regional host Cal State Fullerton (the No. 7 national seed) in Saturday's pivotal winner's bracket game.

Notre Dame remained **unbeaten in six NCAA Regional openers during the nine-year Paul Mainieri era** while the Irish now have **yet to go 0-2 in 17 total postseason tournaments** during nine years of play under Mainieri (who now is just **two wins shy of his 400th with the Irish**).

The 13 runs rank as the **fifth-highest scoring output** in the program's **71 all-time NCAA Tournament games** and are ND's **third-most** runs in the NCAAs **since the 1957 College World Series** season (spanning 60 games), trailing only a 15-1 opening win over Mississippi State at the '92 Atlantic Regional (at Miami) and last season's 25-1 win over South Alabama at the South Bend Regional.

The win also established Kalita and the six other seniors – fellow RHPs J.P. Gagne, Matt Laird, Peter Ogilvie and Brandon Vilorio, CF Kris Billmaier and 1B Mike Holba – as the **winningest class** in Notre Dame baseball history (**189-65-1**), besting the 188-65-1 posted during the careers of the class of 2002.

Arizona (35-22) pounced on Kalita for two runs in the 2nd inning but his teammates picked him up in a big way moments later, sending 10 batters to the plate while racking up seven runs in the 2nd. The onslaught continued with two runs in the 3rd and four more in the 4th, with Arizona cutting into the deficit on a pair of runs in the 8th (as Kalita was tiring) and adding a run in the 9th vs. freshman RHP Ryan Doherty (after second base was conceded on a stolen-base attempt).

All nine Irish starters had collected **hits by the fifth** inning – including **eight of the team's first 13 hits** that came on **2-strike counts** – and freshman DH Matt Bransfield came off the bench to add a hit of his own in the ninth. Junior RHP Richie Gardner (9-3) was roughed up for nine runs on 10 hits and two walks, lasting only three innings while throwing 70 pitches (the nine earned runs were the most allowed by Gardner this season while the 10 hits were second-most).

Two juniors – steady 2B **Steve Sollmann** (3-for-5, 2 RBI, R, BB, 2 SB) and surging C **Javi Sanchez** (3-for-4, RBI, 3 R) – paced one of the highest hit totals in the program's NCAA history while the **five** players making their **first NCAA start combined to hit 7-for-21 with 7 RBI, 7 runs scored, 4 walks and 3 extra-base hits**. Those big hits by the players making their NCAA debut included freshman rightfielder **Cody Rizzo's leadoff double** in the 2nd (which smacked off the leftfield wall), a **bases-loaded triple** by sophomore third baseman **Matt Edwards** seven batters later and sophomore shortstop **Matt Macri's** 3-run shot off the scoreboard in the 4th.

Kalita (7-1) improved to **14-1** in his ND **career** after another trademark performance that again saw single-digit balls leave the infield (9) while **matching the longest outing of his career (8 IP)**. The second-team all-BIG EAST performer put the clamps on Arizona from the 2nd-7th innings, allowing just five of the nine hits against him and one walk during that six-inning stretch. Each of his **career-best eight Ks** also came in the 2nd-7th, over a span of 21 batters faced.

Kalita entered the day with an average of 20.2 outs per nine innings via strikeouts or groundouts and the 6-2, 210-pound righthander used the same formula to hold down the Wildcats. **All but three of Kalita's 24 outs** came courtesy of Ks (8), GOs (10, including three groundball double-plays), an infield foulout and an infield lineout double play. His **last four outings** include a 2.42 ERA, 2-1 record and 2.5 K-to-walk ratio (24/9), plus 26 hits allowed in 26 IP.

The seven-run eruption matched ND's **most runs in an inning since April 10** (a span of 28 games) and represented the team's **21st "big inning"** (5-plus runs) of the season, with the Irish scoring more times in one frame just four times all season. It also extended ND's 2nd-inning dominance that now includes a **71-13 scoring edge during the 2nd**.

The Irish posted their **22nd error-free game** of season and are averaging roughly one error per game (66 Es in 66 GP) – but none of the **season-high four double plays** could have been considered routine, providing great highlight-reel material for the CSTV production crew. The first came with runners on first and second in the bottom of the 2nd, as Arizona looked to answer the big Irish inning. Kalita fell behind 2-hole hitter Moises Duran, who had the green light on a 3-1 pitch and scorched a linedrive headed for left field – but Edwards snagged the ball and flipped to second, doubling off Pat Reilly to end the inning.

The big play shifted to the other side one inning later, with a runner on first and All-American 5-hole hitter Jeff Van Houten looking at a 1-1 count. Van Houten's quick bat sent a low shot that could have skipped down the rightfield line – but junior Joe Thaman showcased his skills as one of the finest defensive f1B in all of college baseball, deftly picking off the smash before stepping on first and sending a lefthanded throw to Macri to force out Derek Decater and kill the threat.

Kalita mowed down the 6-8 hitters on 10 pitches in the 4th (with two Ks and the rightside foulout) and gave up just one hit in the 5th before serving up another double play in the 6th. This one came with Van Houten on first and DH Trevor Crowe facing a full count. Crowe drove the next pitch up the middle but Macri ranged to his left and shoveled the ball to Sollmann as he was falling down behind the bag, with Sollmann completing the throw to end another threat.

The final double play came in the 7th, when Sollmann handled a tricky first-pitch ground ball up the middle off the bat of Reilly, with Sollmann stepping on second to force and throwing on to Thaman (forcing out Nick Hundley for the second out).

Sanchez followed Rizzo's double in the 2nd with an RBI single before scoring on Thaman's first of two opposite-field doubles to the left-center gap. Freshman LF Brennan Grogan then pushed the Irish in front with a single up the middle before Edwards' triple off the leftfield wall pushed the lead to 6-2.

Notre Dame	0-0-7	2-4-0	0-0-0	-	13	17	0
Arizona	2-0-0	0-0-0	0-2-1	-	5	11	0

Ryan Kalita (7-1), Ryan Doherty (9) and Javi Sanchez.

Richie Gardner (L, 9-3), Derek Rodriguez (4), Chris Goodman (5) and Nick Hundley.

Home Run: Matt Macri, ND (2 on in 4th, 4th of season).

Triple: Matt Edwards (ND).

Doubles: Joe Thaman 2 (ND), Cody Rizzo (ND).

NOTRE DAME BASEBALL POSTGAME NOTES

13-5 win vs. Arizona (May 30, 2003; NCAA Fullerton Regional, first round)

• Notre Dame's 6-0 mark in NCAA Regional openers includes wins over three higher seeds (Virginia, Tulane and Arizona) ... ND also won the opener at Florida State in the 2002 Super Regional but lost its CWS opener vs. Stanford in a one-run game (4-3) ... the Irish never have gone 0-2 in any postseason tournament during the Mainieri era (17 total; six NCAA Regionals, one Super Regional, one CWS and nine conference tournaments) ... the Irish now are 15-11 in NCAA games during the Mainieri era (7-3 in the last 10), including 8-8 vs. higher seeds ... the win was Mainieri's 398th at Notre Dame and 730th overall.

• The 17-hit attack matched the team's 4th-most hits in the last 42 NCAA Tournament games (dating back to 1989), behind the 32 vs. South Alabama ('02), 21 vs. Mississippi State ('93) and 20 vs. UC Santa Barbara ('01, in 10 innings).

• All four of ND's postseason wins have come from senior RHPs (also J.P. Gagne, Kalita and Matt Laird in the BIG EAST Tournament).

• The Irish now have won by 5-plus runs ("big wins") 22 times this season.

• ND's seven runs in the 2nd inning matched the team's 5th-highest scoring in any inning this season, behind an 8-run inning vs. Chicago State and 9-run innings vs. Georgetown, Detroit and St. John's.

• The five ND players making their first appearance in an NCAA Tournament game included **Edwards** and **Macri** (both injured in '02), plus the freshman trio of **Rizzo**, **Grogan** and DH **Steve Andres** ... Rizzo, from nearby Temecula, added another huge defensive play in the bottom of the 9th, sprinting all the way from his RF spot and making a headfirst grab of a ball in shallow CF (with four of his teammates also converging on a ball obscured by the sun) ... Rizzo's 52 runs scored in 2003 rank as the 4th-most ever by an ND freshman ... Edwards extended his hitting streak to nine games and is hitting .500 in that streak (19-for-38, 13 RBI) while his 68 RBI are the most by an ND player since Mike Amrhein had 71 and Jeff Wagner 69 in 1997.

• The Irish now have totaled eight home runs in the last 12 games, after going seven games without a single HR (ND has three HRs in five postseason games).

• Senior CF **Kris Billmaier**, who brought a .471 career NCAA Tournament batting avg. into the game, hit 1-for-5 while extending his hitting streak to seven games.

• **Sollmann** moved past 2000 grad. Jeff Felker (246) and former teammate Paul O'Toole (247, '99-'02) into 8th place on the ND career hits list, with 248 ... only two ND players have totaled more hits as juniors (Steve Stanley had 266 from '99-'01 and Dan Peltier 257 from '87-'89) ... he also now ranks 7th on the ND single-season hit list with 91 (only Stanley has posted more hits in a season since 1995, with 102 in '01 and 119 in '02) ... Sollmann extended his hitting streak to 10 games (his 2nd double-digit hit streak of the season and 4th of his career) and is batting 23-for-50 in the streak ... Sollmann's career batting avg. in the NCAAs improved to .470 (31-for-66, 16 RBI, 19 R, 5 SB), including 16-for-21 (.762) in ND's last four NCAA Regional games.

• **Sanchez** followed up his BIG EAST Tournament MVP performance (8-for-11, 4 BB, 4 sac. bunts, 5 R, 6 RBI, 3 2B) with a 3-for-4 game ... his totals in the last five games now include 11-for-15 batting (.733), 7 RBI and 8 runs scored ... other top hitters in the five postseason games include Edwards (.476, 10-for-21, 8 RBI, 6 R, 3B, 2B, 3 BB), Grogan (.462, 6-for-13, 2 RBI, 5 R, 2 BB, 1-2 SB), Rizzo (.444, 8-for-18, 4 RBI, 8 R, 2B, 3 BB, 3 HBP), Bransfield (.429, 3-for-7, RBI, R, BB) and Sollmann (.407, 11-for-27, 3 RBI, 5 R, 2 BB, 4-4 SB).

• **Edwards'** triple was similar to his 3-run double to open the scoring in the 1st inning of last week's BIG EAST title game vs. Rutgers.

• The Irish have turned in five straight double-digit hit games, batting .368 in that postseason stretch (70-for-190) while totaling 53 runs (9-plus in all five, double-digits in three).

• Sollmann (49) and Macri (44) now have combined for 93 error-free games up the middle and are the first ND teammates ever to post 170-plus fielding assists in the same season (Macri 174, Sollmann 172).

• Freshman RHP **Ryan Doherty** saw his streak of not allowing an earned run end at 14 appearances and 23.0 innings (dating back to the season opener vs. Dayton on Feb. 21).

• The Irish put six of their first seven leadoff batters on base, equaling the most leadoff baserunners in one game this season.

• ND now has been shut out just once in its last 310 games.

• Arizona was one of three teams that never had lost to the Irish in a minimum of five games played (now 5-1).

FAMILIAR TERRITORY – Notre Dame has plenty of history when it comes to posting upset NCAA wins on the opponent's home field – many times in some of college baseball's most hostile environments – doing so six times in the previous 11 seasons: at Miami (6-3, in '92), at Florida State (4-3 in '93, 10-4 and 3-1 in '02), at Clemson (8-1, '94) and at Mississippi State (7-0, in '00).

TOURNEY-TESTED – ND is the only team at the Fullerton Regional coming off a full conference tournament, as the Pac-10 and Big West do not sponsor postseason tournaments while USD won a three-game WCC postseason series vs. Pepperdine ... Arizona closed by dropping three games to Arizona State while Fullerton was busy battling Big West regular-season champ Long Beach State.

UPDATED CAREER STATS FOR ND VETERANS

Player	GP/GS	AB	R	H	2B/3B/HR	BB/K	RBI	HP	SF/SH	SB	AVG
Billmaier	214/197	719	127	207	37/2/15	76/81	138	21	11/19	7-12	.288
Edwards	68/67	248	43	92	17/2/8	27/40	72	5	4/0	3-6	.371
Macri	74/73	271	50	73	18/5/5	33/68	46	6	2/7	7-11	.269
Sanchez	130/121	434	91	123	20/4/6	45/50	54	12	2/13	7-8	.283
Sollmann	178/176	677	170	248	33/11/11	76/68	122	8	10/16	64-83	.366
Thaman	165/143	497	82	138	28/2/9	39/98	81	8	5/22	3-8	.278

UPDATED CAREER NCAA TOURNAMENT STATS FOR ND VETERANS

Player	GP/GS	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	BB	K	RBI	SB	AVG
Sollmann	15/15	66	19	31	1	3	1	6	3	16	5-5	.470
Billmaier 20/20		75	9	34	7	1	0	9	10	18	0-1	.453
Sanchez 10/10		38	8	13	1	0	1	4	4	6	0-0	.342
Thaman 15/15		54	12	14	1	0	0	6	2	5	0-2	.259

TOMMY AND TOMMY – ND head coach Paul Mainieri's son (and team batboy) Tommy Mainieri is named after his godfather Tommy Lasorda, a longtime friend of the Mainieri family and supporter of the Irish baseball team (see p. 8 of media guide) ... Lasorda gave a brief speech to the ND team during a Wednesday-night dinner at one of his favorite restaurants, Burger Continental (which served the Irish one of its best all-around meals in recent memory) ... he also spoke at the pep rally before a 2001 ND-Tennessee football game and was the keynote speaker at the ND Baseball program's 2001 "Opening-Night Dinner" (attended by nearly 1,000 season-ticket holders) ... Lasorda also caught up with the Irish at a team breakfast during the 2003 CWS – where his namesake Tommy Mainieri became a favorite of the various camera crews and jumbotron operators.

PRIMETIME PLAYERS – Current senior CF **Kris Billmaier** and junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** led the Irish to the 2002 College World Series with a combined .667 batting avg. in the '02 Regional and Super Regional rounds (36-for-54; Billmaier 16-for-26 and Sollmann 20-for-28) ... Sollmann was named MVP of the South Bend Regional after batting 13-for-16 (.813) with 8 RBI, 10 runs scored and 20 total bases in two wins over Ohio State and the record-setting 25-1 win over the Regional's top seed South Alabama ... Sollmann's dominating game vs. South Alabama (6-for-7, 7 RBI, 6 R, 3-run HR, 2 3B, 13 TB) included setting an NCAA Tournament record for runs in a game (tying ND record) while also tying the NCAA Tournament and ND hit records and matching the NCAA Tournament triples mark ... Billmaier's biggest game was a 4-for-5, 5-RBI effort in the 10-4 opening win at Florida State during the Super Regional series.

TWO OF THE BEST – **Steve Sollmann** (.470, see full stats above) and **Kris Billmaier** (.453) own the **second and third-best** career NCAA Tournament batting averages in ND history (min. 20 ABs), trailing only the .514 (19-for-37) posted by C/IF Matt Haas during the 1992-94 NCAAAs (6 R, 15 RBI, HR, 2B, 3 BB) ... Billmaier's NCAA avg. is **well above his career average** in all other games (.269) while Sollmann owns a .366 overall career batting avg. (8th in ND history, including .355 in non-NCAA games).

BOTTOM OF ORDER PRODUCES AT BET – Notre Dame's .361 team batting avg. at last week's BIG EAST Tournament was led by a strong showing from the 7-8-9 batters, as freshman RF **Cody Rizzo** (6-for-13, 6 R, 4 RBI, 3 BB, 3 HBP, K), junior C and tournament MVP **Javi Sanchez** (8-for-11, 5 R, 6 RBI, 3 2B, 4 BB, 4 SAC, 35 of 36 innings behind the plate) and junior 1B **Joe Thaman** (4-for-14, 5 RBI, HR, SAC, 3 Ks) – plus freshman 3B **Greg Lopez** (1-for-4, R, 2 Ks, one start in 9-hole) – combined to hit .452 (19-for-42) with 13 runs scored, 15 RBI and 25 total bases (.595 slugging) ... the 7-9 starters also reached base on 7 walks and 3 HBPs, with 5 sac. bunts, just 6 Ks (one every 7 ABs) and no errors in the field ... Sanchez set a BET record for batting (.727, 8-for-11) while getting the job done on eight other plate appearances (4 BB, 4 SAC) and having a hand in 11 of ND's 40 runs in the four tournament games (6 RBI, 5 runs).

NCAA GAMES IN THE MAINIERI ERA – Notre Dame has posted a 15-11 record in NCAA Tournament games during nine seasons of the Paul Mainieri era ('95-'03), including a 7-3 mark in the last 10 (8-4 in last 12 NCAA games, 11-6 in last 17) ... the Irish are 8-8 in Mainieri-era NCAA games when facing a higher seed, with wins over Virginia (12-1, '96), Tulane (8-4 and 10-6, '00), South Alabama (25-1, in '02), Florida State (10-4 and 3-1 in '02), Rice (5-3, '02) and Arizona (13-5, '03).

STRONG STARTERS – Notre Dame owns an all-time record of 11-10 in NCAA Tournament openers (all rounds), including six straight opening wins before dropping a 4-3 battle vs. Stanford in the 2002 CWS ... prior to that, the Irish had won all six of their NCAA openers – by an average score of 10-3 (58-20 overall, now 71-25 after the win over Arizona) – in the Paul Mainieri era: vs. Virginia at the 1996 South I Regional (12-1, played at Alabama), vs. Creighton at the 1999 South Bend Regional (8-1), vs. Tulane at the 2000 Starkville Regional (8-4), vs. Wisconsin-Milwaukee at the '01 SBR (12-4), vs. Ohio State at the '02 SBR (8-6) and at Florida State in the '02 Super Regionals (10-4) ... ND was the lower seed in four of the above wins (vs. UVa, Tulane, FSU and Arizona).

SOLLMANN, GAGNE NAMED ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS – Two of ND's all-BIG EAST Conference performers – junior 2B **Steve Sollmann** (Cincinnati, Ohio) and senior **RHP J.P. Gagne** (Bloomington, Minn.) – have been named to the 2003 Verizon Academic All-America team for Division I baseball, as selected by the College Sports Information Directors of America ... it marks the **fourth straight year that ND has produced two Academic All-Americans**, a stretch **unmatched** in all of Division I baseball ... Sollmann was one of 11 players named to the Academic All-America second team while Gagne was one of two pitchers named to the third team ... ND joined three other schools – Nebraska, Columbia and Rice – with multiple players among the 33 honorees (each had two) ... **Sollmann** just posted his second consecutive Dean's List **semester (3.67 GPA)** and carries a **3.30 cumulative GPA as a marketing major** ... **Gagne graduated with a 3.40 GPA as a finance major**, including a **4.0** during the 2003 spring semester to go along with three previous Dean's List semesters ... ND is one of **eight current NCAA Tournament teams that produced '03 Academic All-Americans**, with the others including Nebraska, Baylor, Lamar, Rice, Miami, Alabama and Wichita State ... ND's four-year run of multiple Academic All-Americans began in 2000 with IF **Jeff Perconte** (1st team) and LHP **Mike Naumann** (3rd), followed by Naumann (1st) and OF **Brian Stavisky** (3rd team) in '01 and then Stavisky (3rd) and 3B **Andrew Bushey** (2nd) in '02 ... ND baseball players now have combined for 21 Academic All-America awards (since '77).

SIXTEEN IRISH PLAYERS POST 3.0-PLUS GPAs IN SPRING – It was another strong showing in the classroom for many members of the Notre Dame baseball team, with a 2.95 team GPA in the 2003 spring semester including 16 players with semester GPAs of 3.0-plus (seven of them freshmen), plus nine players with GPAs above 3.20 (seven at 3.40-plus) ... ND's 16 players who posted a 3.0 GPA during the 2003 spring term included seven veterans: senior RHP **J.P. Gagne** (4.0, finance), senior 1B **Mike Holba** (3.75, political science/anthropology), senior RHPs **Matt Laird** (3.17, graduated with a 3.34; accounting) and **Peter Ogilvie** (3.42, graduated with a 3.23; product design), junior 2B **Steve Solimann** (3.67, marketing), junior IFs **Tim Murray** (3.67, mathematics) and **Zach Sisko** (3.54, pre-professional Arts and Letters/history), junior C **Javi Sanchez** (3.15; management) and junior LHP **Cody Wilkins** (3.19, marketing/philosophy) ... the freshmen included DHs **Steve Andres** (3.40) and **Matt Bransfield** (3.07), OFs **Brennan Grogan** (3.17, after 3.67 in fall) and **Alex Nettey** (3.20), 3B **Greg Lopez** (3.24) and LHPs **Tom Thornton** (3.19, after 3.33 in fall) and **Matt Arminio** (3.13, after 3.53 in fall) ... senior RHP **Brandon Vilorio** graduated with a 3.62 GPA as an electrical engineering major.

ROADTRIPPERS DELUXE – Notre Dame's long trek to southern California is nothing new, as ND will have traversed some 23,000 miles during its 11 roadtrips to date ... ND opened with 17 straight road games, covering roughly 8,600 miles in trips to Arizona, Minnesota, Florida and Pennsylvania ... the Fullerton trip marks ND's fourth straight week on the road, spanning nearly 10,000 miles ... here's a look at the roadtrip mileage of ND's 2003 roadtrips (some include bus rides with flights originating from Chicago):

VS. THE BIG WEST – Notre Dame owns a **3-5 all-time reocr vs. the Big West**, including 1-0 vs. UCSB (11-10, in '01 NCAAs) and UOP, 1-2 vs. Long Beach, 0-1 vs. UC Riverside and 0-2 vs. Fullerton.

BIG-INNING BOPPERS – ND's 17-game midseason winning streak included 10 "big innings" of five-plus runs but those flurries had dried up in recent weeks, with just five big innings in the 24 games before a pair of 6-run innings last week vs. Rutgers in the BIG EAST Tournament ... yesterday's 7-run 2nd inning vs. Arizona marked ND's 21st overall inning with 5-plus runs this season (8th with 7-plus).

LAIRD DELIVERS – With BIG EAST pitcher of the year Chris Niesel sidelined with a finger injury, ND turned to senior reliever **Matt Laird** in the BIG EAST title game ... Laird – whose 67 previous appearances had included just nine starts as a freshman (the last May 3, 2000, vs. Oakland) – allowed just nine balls out of the infield in 37 batters faced, with his 27 outs including 18 via groundballs and six on Ks (plus an infield lineout and just two flyouts) ... he avoided the big inning while scattering nine hits and just one walk over the gutsy 128-pitch outing (81 located for strikes), with one of RU's three runs coming unearned.

DEFENSIVE-MINDED – Notre Dame's .971 season fielding pct. remains well on team-record pace (three previous teams posted a .965), with the Irish totaling just **66 errors in 60 games** (1.1 Es per game) ... ND has posted **22 error-free games**, **19 one-error games** and just eight games with three-plus Es ... **unearned runs** have provided the **margin of defeat** for the Irish **just twice** this season, in the 14-8 loss to Arizona State (6 UER) and the 3-1 loss to Ball State (2 UER in the 9th).

TAKING 26 FOR THE TEAM – Freshman RF **Cody Rizzo** (Temecula, Calif.) has been hit-by-pitch 26 times this season ... just nine previous Div. I players have totaled more HBPs in a season, including Fullerton's David Bacani in 1998 (30; with CSF's Shane Costa totaling 26 HBPs in '02) ... the others in the NCAA record book with 27-plus HBPs include: Richmond's Andrew Slater (33, '97), Fairleigh Dickinson's Steve Dembowski (32, '79), Southern Utah's Chris Nelson (29, '02), ASU's Jonah Martin (29, '00), Nevada's Corky Miller (29, '98), Nebraska's Daniel Bruce (28, '02), UNC's Ryan Earey (28, '00) and FAU's Gabe Somarriba (27 in '01 and '02).

Inside The Notre Dame Bullpen (stats for relief appearances only, pre-NCAAs)														
Pitcher	ERA	W-L	Rel.	GP	SV	IP	H (Avg., HR)	R/ER	K/BB	WP	HBP	Inh.	R's Sc.	1st Bat's
Arminio	0.00	0-0	2	0	2.1	0 (.000, 0)	0/0	1/1	0	0	0	0-of-2	0-for-1	
Thornton	1.59	0-0	6	0	11.1	9 (.243, 0)	3/2	5/6	0	2	1-of-4	2-4, BB, HB, K		
Viloria	1.64	1-0	19	2	22.0	17 (.218, 0)	3/2	17/4	0	0	2-of-10	3-15, 2 BB, 4 K		
Doherty	2.33	1-0	13	0	19.1	16 (.225, 0)	8/5	33/6	1	2	1-of-3(SF)	2-11, BB, 6 K		
Gagne	2.79	3-5	27	12	51.2	46 (.237, 2)	26/16	36/20	3	0	3-of-11	5-23, 3 BB, 2 K		
Ogilvie	4.50	0-0	1	0	2.0	2 (.250, 0)	1/1	2/0	0	0	0	0-for-1		
Jones	5.84	2-0	11	0	13.2	17 (.293, 0)	11/8	13/2	1	2	3-of-6	1-for-10, K		
Vergara	5.49	0-0	9	1	19.2	21 (.266, 2)	15/12	14/14	2	4	0	1-for-8, 3 K		
Laird	5.55	1-1	18	1	18.0	30 (.233, 5)	25/22	35/16	5	2	4-of-4	3-15, 2 BB, 8 K		
Kalita	8.10	0-0	1	0	3.1	6 (.545, 0)	3/3	0/3	0	1	0	BB		
Wilkins	9.00	0-0	3	0	4.0	10 (.500, 1)	6/4	5/1	0	0	0	1-for-3, K		
Axford	0.00	0-0	1	0	2.1	4 (.364, 0)	5/4	3/7	1	0	1-1	1-for-1		
Bickford	18.00	0-0	1	0	2.0	4 (.364, 0)	4/4	2/3	1	0	0	0-for-1, K		
Totals	4.04	8-6	112	17	179.2	169 (.251, 10)	99/75	155/73	13	13	15-of-41	19-93 (.204)		
											(37%)	9 BB, 27 K		

PUTTING OUT FIRES – Several ND relievers have slammed the door when inheriting runners ... senior **Brandon Vilorio** has allowed just 2-of-10 inherited baserunners to score, senior closer **J.P. Gagne** 3-of-11 ... freshman LHP **Tom Thornton** has allowed just 1-of-4 inherited runners to score (rest of the staff 9-of-16) ... first batters are 3-for-15 vs. Vilorio and 5-for-23 (.217) vs. Gagne.

THE FIREMAN – Senior setup man **Brandon Vilorio** owns the ND record for lowest career walk average (1.63 BB per 9 IP), just below the standing record of 1.64 set by Alan Walania from 1990-93 ... Vilorio also owns the 5th-best career ERA in the ND record book (2.61), among pitchers with 60-plus IP ... Vilorio owns a staff-best 1.64 ERA with a 1.64 walk avg. (2nd behind Chris Niesel's 1.49), 4.2 K-to-walk ratio (4th-best) and a .218 opponent batting avg. (2nd-best) ... teams are batting just .152 vs. Vilorio with runners on base and .185 with 2 outs (both tops on the staff) while he has yet to allow a home run in 22 IP ... he also leads the team in "WHIP" (9.6 walks and hits allowed per 9 IP) and is averaging a team-best 34.2 batters faced per 9 IP.

CLOSING WITH THE CLOSER – Current senior closer **J.P. Gagne** had some rocky moments early in the 2002 postseason but managed to post an amazing ratio of strikeouts (15) to walks (1) in 18 innings of '02 postseason action ... his best two outings came at key times, retiring nine straight to close the 10-4 opening win at Florida State before coming on to strike out the side in the 9th inning of the 3-1 clincher in that three-game NCAA Super-Regional series ... he also went 7-2 in his final nine decisions of the 2002 season.

NOTRE DAME BASEBALL – By The Numbers

- 22,737 Notre Dame's combined travel mileage in 11 roadtrips during 2003 season
- 3,239 Notre Dame's all-time varsity baseball games (pre-NCAAs)
- 730 Paul Mainieri's career coaching wins in 21 overall seasons
- 515 Total pitches in the 19-inning ND-Rutgers game
- .453 Kris Billmaier's career NCAA Tournament batting average (.470 by Steve Sollmann)
- 449 Innings caught by Javi Sanchez in 2003 (of 518, or 85%)
- 398 Paul Mainieri's career wins in nine seasons at Notre Dame
- .366 Steve Sollmann's career batting avg. (8th in ND history)
- .361 ND's team batting avg. at '03 BE Tournament (.230 at previous seven)
- 280 All-time Notre Dame baseball opponents
- 248 Steve Sollmann's career hits (3rd-most ever by an ND junior)
- 214 Kris Billmaier's career game played with the Irish
- 143-47 ND's combined record during the past three seasons (nearly +100)
- 110 Combined games missed in 2002 by Matt Edwards (59, broken leg) and Matt Macri (51, elbow surgery)
- 93 Combined error-free games by middle-IFs Sollmann and Macri in '03
- 92 J.P. Gagne's career appearances (tying ND record, Chris Michalak)
- 80 ND baseball seasons with a winning record (of 111)
- 43 Home states represented among ND baseball all-time letterwinners
- 30 ND baseball all-time letterwinners from California
- 26 Cody Rizzo's times hit-by-pitch in 2003 (11th in NCAA history)
- 25.0 J.P. Gagne's recent streak of IP without allowing an earned run
- 23.0 Ryan Doherty's recent streak of IP without allowing an earned run
- 22 Irish "Big wins" in 2003 (by 5-plus runs)
- 19 Home states represented on ND's 2003 roster
- 17 Winning streak posted by Irish in 2003 (2nd in ND history)
- 16 ND baseball players who posted 3.0-plus GPA in '03 spring semester
- 15 ND's streak of consecutive 40-win seasons (3rd-longest active)
- 13' 9" Combined height of fr. pitchers Doherty (7-1) and Thornton (6-7)
- 13-5 Combined postseason record by the Irish in 2002 and '03
- 9-1 ND's 2003 record in 1-run games during '03 season
- 9 ND's total BIG EAST Conference sports titles (BE record) in 2002-03 (in 22 sports)
- 8 ND's BIG EAST Tournament appearances (in 8 seasons)
- 6-2 Won-loss record by the Irish in last eight BET games (12-12 in first 24)
- 6 ND's NCAA appearances in 9-year Mainieri era
- 5 Position starters lost to graduation and draft from the '02 CWS team
- 5 Irish players who have started in CF this season (just one total started in CF from '99-'02)
- 4 Consecutive years for ND with two Academic All-Americans
- 3.54 Current team ERA
- 3 Teams in national ERA top-20 each of last 4 yrs (ND, Texas, Rice)
- 2 Teams that have won back-to-back BIG EAST titles (SJU, '85-'86; ND '02-'03)