



2004 NOTRE DAME WOMEN'S TENNIS

11 Straight Top-30 Finishes • 10 NCAA Tournaments Since '93 • 13 All-Americans Since '94

BIG EAST Championship Notes Package • April 27, 2004 • Contact: Bo Rottenborn, Rottenborn.2@nd.edu

NOTRE DAME WOMEN'S TENNIS (10-10)

SEPTEMBER

25-28 at adidas Invitational NTS
(Peachtree City, Ga.)

OCTOBER

3-5 at Kentucky Fall Classic NTS
(Lexington, Ky.)

7-12 at ITA All-American Championships NTS
(Pacific Palisades, Calif.)

17 Fri. USC (exhibition) W, 4-3

23-28 at ITA Midwest Championships NTS
(Kalamazoo, Mich.)

NOVEMBER

6-9 at ITA National Indoor Championships NTS
(Ann Arbor, Mich.)

7-9 at Midwest Blast NTS

JANUARY

29 Thurs. (21) at Michigan (34) L, 3-4

31 Sat. (21) Ohio State (48) W, 5-2

FEBRUARY

1 Sun. (21) Wisconsin (64) W, 7-0

13 Fri. (26) at VCU (14) W, 4-3

14 Sat. (26) vs. Boston College W, 6-1
(Blacksburg, Va.)

15 Sun. (26) at Virginia Tech (69) W, 5-2

20 Fri. (26) BYU (20) W, 6-1

29 Sun. (20) Indiana (26) W, 5-2

MARCH

4 Thurs. (19) Illinois (17) L, 2-5

10 Wed. (18) vs. Duke (6) L, 1-6
(Wikalooa, Hawaii)

13 Sat. (18) vs. Tennessee (36) L, 1-6

18 Thurs. (21) Iowa (47) W, 6-1

27 Sat. (23) at Wake Forest (33) L, 0-7

28 Sun. (23) at North Carolina (9) L, 0-5

APRIL

3 Sat. (27) Marquette W, 7-0

4 Sun. (27) Miami (18) W, 5-2

10 Sat. (23) at William & Mary (43) L, 3-4

12 Mon. (23) at Texas (14) L, 2-5

15 Thurs. (24) Northwestern (11) L, 3-4

21 Wed. (27) at Purdue (61) L, 3-4

BIG EAST Championship (Coral Gables, Fla.)

30 Fri. Semifinals 9:00 a.m.

MAY

1 Sat. Final 9:00 a.m.

14-16 NCAA 1st/2nd Rounds (campus sites)

20-23 NCAA Rd.. of 16-Final (Athens, Ga.)

24-29 NCAA Singles/Doubles Chps. (Athens, Ga.)

Home matches in **bold** and held at Courtney Tennis Center, weather permitting. Otherwise, home matches are held in Eck Tennis Pavilion.

All times are local to site

NOTE: Number in parentheses to left of opponent is Notre Dame ITA national ranking at time of match; number to right of opponent is its ITA national ranking at time of match.

BIG EAST Championship

Neil Schiff Tennis Complex • Coral Gables, Fla.

[4] #71 Virginia Tech (13-12, 6-2) vs. [5] Syracuse (6-11, 5-2)
First Round • Thursday, April 29, 9:00 a.m.

[3] #58 Boston College (13-5, 2-2) vs. [6] Rutgers (13-7, 7-3)
First Round • Thursday, April 29, Noon

[1] #28 Notre Dame (10-10, 3-0) vs. Virginia Tech/Syracuse
Semifinals • Friday, April 30, 9:00 a.m.

[2] #26 Miami (15-3, 2-1) vs. Boston College/Rutgers
Semifinals • Friday, April 30, Noon

Fifth-Place Match • Friday, April 30, 3:00 p.m.

Final • Saturday, May 1, 9:00 a.m.

Third-Place Match • Saturday, May 1, Noon

NOTRE DAME LOOKS TO DEFEND TITLE IN BIG EAST CHAMPIONSHIP THIS

WEEKEND: The top-seeded and 28th-ranked University of Notre Dame women's tennis team (10-10, 3-0) will look to defend its title in the BIG EAST Championship this weekend at the Neil Schiff Tennis Complex in Coral Gables, Fla. The Irish, who gained a first-round bye in the six-team event, open play against either fourth-seeded #71 Virginia Tech (13-12, 6-2) or fifth-seeded Syracuse (6-11, 5-2) on Friday at 9 a.m. (EDT) in semifinal action, while the title match is slated for Saturday at 9 a.m. Notre Dame and Miami (seeded second and ranked 26th this year) have met in each of the eight BIG EAST finals since the Irish joined the conference, with Notre Dame winning five times.

HOTLINE TO FEATURE IN-MATCH UPDATES: Fans and media unable to attend the 2004 BIG EAST Tennis Championships will be able to keep up with the action via the Notre Dame Sports Hotline, which will feature in-match updates during all Notre Dame men's and women's matches. The Hotline will be updated at the top and bottom of each hour, with the possibility of more frequent updates if the action is tight. These reports can be accessed by dialing (574) 631-3000 and selecting option #8 for tennis. In addition, the official athletic website of the University of Notre Dame, www.und.com, will feature recaps of all the Irish action at the end of each day.

LAST TIME ON THE COURTS: For the third time in four matches, Notre Dame dropped a third-set tiebreaker in losing 4-3, as Granger native and 1999 Penn High School graduate Melissa Woods beat Irish junior **Sarah Jane Connelly** (Oklahoma City, Okla./Bishop McGuinness H.S.) at No. 6 singles to hand #61 Purdue the upset victory last Wednesday afternoon in the Lafayette Sports Center. Notre Dame took a 3-0 lead, but the Boilermakers won the final four singles matches — including two in three sets — to hand the Irish their fourth 4-3 loss of the season and third in 12 days. In the final match, which went on for more than an hour with the team score tied 3-3 and no other contests remaining, Woods did not commit an error in the tiebreaker, jumping out to a 5-0 lead and converting on her first match point for a 6-2, 5-7, 7-6 (7-1) victory. Connelly's return was effective early in the set, winning 10 of the first 11 points on Woods' serve. She led 4-1 and 40-15 before Woods began rushing the net more frequently, which instigated a comeback. The Boiler then won four straight games and served for the set at 5-4. Connelly broke serve and held to go up 6-5. She then had a team match point on Woods' serve, but dumped a backhand volley into the net. The Purdue senior proceeded to win 11 of the next 13 points to clinch the victory.

The Irish won the doubles point and then got a pair of quick victories in singles to move within one point of triumph. The match's initial point came down to a tiebreaker at No. 2, where senior co-captain **Alicia Salas** (Englewood, Colo./Cherry Creek H.S.) and sophomore **Lauren Connelly** (Oklahoma City, Okla./Bishop McGuinness H.S.) prevailed 7-3 over Hala Sufi and Shawna Zuccarini. The Irish duo held a 7-2 lead and also was up 8-7 before the Boilermakers forced a tiebreaker. Salas and Connelly have won six in a row and are 21-7 on the season, including 15-5 in dual matches at No. 2 and 10-3 vs. Midwest Region foes. Freshman twins **Christian Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) and **Catrina Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.), ranked 44th, were first off in doubles, notching an 8-2 victory at No. 1 against Woods and Gretchen Haynor. In the other doubles match, Lara Burgarello and Alyssa Rodriguez won the final three games to overcome a 6-5 deficit in defeating Sarah Jane Connelly and senior

OMNI HOTELS COLLEGIATE TENNIS RANKINGS

Release: April 27, 2004			
Rk.	School	Prev.	Avg.
1.	Stanford	1	112.11
2.	Florida	2	105.89
3.	Vanderbilt	3	93.51
4.	Duke	4	83.33
5.	Georgia	6	79.69
6.	Clemson	7	77.04
7.	USC	5	77.04
8.	UCLA	8	76.16
9.	Washington	9	74.95
10.	Texas	11	69.48
11.	Northwestern	10	68.80
12.	Tulane	12	66.13
13.	California	13	59.90
14.	North Carolina	14	59.28
15.	Fresno State	15	54.80
16.	Kentucky	18	50.57
17.	Texas A&M	17	48.27
18.	LSU	20	46.95
19.	Oklahoma	19	46.50
20.	Illinois	16	45.50
21.	Indiana	25	44.70
22.	BYU	21	43.78
23.	Tennessee	24	40.22
24.	TCU	26	36.36
25.	Florida State	22	36.06

Other Ranked Notre Dame opponents

26.	<i>Miami</i>	23	35.52
27.	Michigan	29	34.35
28.	NOTRE DAME	27	32.92
32.	Wake Forest	32	29.63
36.	William & Mary	36	24.38
40.	Iowa	39	16.30
49.	Ohio State	54	12.58
50.	Purdue	61	12.46
53.	Wisconsin	50	11.20
57.	VCU	51	8.72
58.	<i>Boston College</i>	56	8.41
71.	<i>Virginia Tech</i>	73	4.56

2004 TEAM INFORMATION

Starters Returning

Caylan Leslie (Sr.)	Alicia Salas (Sr.)
Sarah Jane Connelly (Jr.)	Lauren Connelly (So.)
Jennifer Smith (So.)	Kristina Stastny (So.)

Monogram Winners Ret./Lost: 9/2

2003-04 Captains

Caylan Leslie, Alicia Salas

2003 Record, Rank: 16-9, 21st

2003 BIG EAST Championship (Champion)

#24 Notre Dame 4, Boston College 0
#24 Notre Dame 4, #20 Miami 3

2003 NCAA Championship (Second Round)

#21 Notre Dame 4, Missouri 1
#15 Vanderbilt 4, #21 Notre Dame 0

Emily Neighbours (Indianapolis, Ind./Park Tudor School) 8-6 at No. 3. The Thompsons lost just three combined games in notching easy singles victories. Christian took only 55 minutes to beat Haynor 6-1, 6-0 at No. 2, winning 10 straight games to finish the match. She has won five of her last six and is 23-13 this season. Catrina won 6-1, 6-1 in 63 minutes against Amy Walgenbach at No. 3 to improve to 19-13.

Purdue got on the board when Rodriguez completed a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Lauren Connelly at No. 4. Sufi then registered an upset of 19th-ranked Salas, winning 6-2, 0-6, 6-0 at No. 1. Zuccarini tied the match at 3-3 by downing sophomore **Kristina Stastny** (St. Louis, Mo./St. Joseph's Academy) 6-3, 6-4 at No. 5.

IRISH IN THE BIG EAST CHAMPIONSHIP: Notre Dame was named the No. 1 seed in the 2004 BIG EAST Championship, which will take place Thursday through Saturday at the Neil Schiff Tennis Complex in Coral Gables, Fla. For the fourth straight year, the format of the event will be a single-elimination tournament of the top six teams in the league, as selected by the conference, with the top two seeds gaining first-round byes. The winner receives the BIG EAST's automatic berth into the NCAA Championship, which begins at campus sites on May 14. The Irish have earned the No. 1 seed every year but one (2003) since joining the conference, advancing to the final each time to face Miami, winning titles in 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001, and 2003.

Play gets underway Thursday morning with fourth-seeded and 71st-ranked Virginia Tech and the fifth seed, Syracuse, playing at 9 a.m. (EDT). In the other quarterfinal matchup, the No. 3 seed, 58th-ranked Boston College, will face sixth-seeded Rutgers at noon. The semifinals are set for Friday with the Irish taking on the VT-Syracuse winner at 9 a.m., followed by second-seeded and 26th-ranked Miami facing the BC-Rutgers winner at noon. Friday's losing teams will play at 3 p.m. Friday for fifth place. The championship is slated for Saturday at 9 a.m., while the third-place match will be at Noon.

A season ago, the Irish, forced to begin under the lights at 7 a.m. and play two matches in one day due to rain, defeated Boston College 4-0 in the semifinals and then won a thrilling 4-3 decision against Miami in the championship. In the final, the singles matches were played first. Both teams won a close two-setter and a pair of three-setters to make the score 3-3, forcing doubles competition. The Hurricanes got an 8-2 win at No. 1, and the Irish won by the same score at No. 3, leaving the outcome in the hands of the No. 2 players. Notre Dame's pair of **Sarah Jane Connelly** (Oklahoma City, Okla./Bishop McGuinness H.S.) and **Kristina Stastny** (St. Louis, Mo./St. Joseph's Academy) defeated Miami's Igna de Villiers and Abby Smith 8-6 in that match to deliver the conference title.

Six Notre Dame players have past experience playing in the BIG EAST Championship, and the four that are not injured this season have combined for an 8-2 record in singles and a 6-2 mark in doubles in past league tournament play. Senior co-captain **Alicia Salas** (Englewood, Colo./Cherry Creek H.S.) is unbeaten in three singles matches (while one was abandoned) and holds a 2-1 record in doubles, while sophomore **Lauren Connelly** (Oklahoma City, Okla./Bishop McGuinness H.S.) won both of her singles contests a year ago, but was beaten in doubles. Sarah Jane Connelly is 3-0 in doubles and 2-1 in singles (with one match abandoned). In addition to her doubles win, Stastny was 1-1 in singles in '03. Though out this season due to injuries, senior co-captain **Caylan Leslie** (Newport Beach, Calif./Corona del Mar H.S.) and sophomore **Jennifer Smith** (Charlotte, N.C./South Mecklenburg H.S.) have past experience in the BIG EAST tournament. Leslie is 1-2 in singles with one match abandoned, while Smith is 0-1, with one abandoned. They combined to win at No. 3 doubles against Miami in '03.

Salas is a leading candidate for the 2003 BIG EAST Most Outstanding Player award, as she is the second-highest-ranked player in the conference behind Miami's Megan Bradley, who is fourth. The Irish senior, listed 23rd, is 23-15 this season, including 14 victories over ranked opponents. Past Notre Dame winners of the award were **Jennifer Hall** in 1996 and current Irish assistant coach **Michelle Dasso** in 2000 and '01.

Head coach **Jay Louderback** has been named BIG EAST Coach of the Year five times. As one of just two league mentors whose squad is ranked in the top 50, he will once again be a candidate for the conference's top coach.

A year ago, the conference began also naming six singles players and three doubles teams to its all-tournament team. Salas and Sarah Jane Connelly gained mention in both singles and doubles, while Leslie was an all-tournament singles honoree and Stastny and Lauren Connelly were rewarded for their doubles play.

Notre Dame has experienced a tremendous amount of success against BIG EAST opponents over the years, compiling a superb 36-4 record against current league members. In fact, Miami is the only BIG EAST team to solve the Irish, going 4-9 against Notre Dame with three victories coming in conference championship matches (4-2 in 1998, 5-2 in 2000, and 4-1 in 2002). In tournament play, the Irish have an 18-3 record and have registered shutout victories in 12 of 13 non-championship matches (second round and semifinals) since joining the conference in 1996.

Aside from Miami, Notre Dame has never lost to another BIG EAST opponent, going 26-0 against the rest of the league all-time. Among the other combatants in this year's championship field, the Irish are 10-0 against Boston College (including a 6-1 win on Feb. 14), 5-0 against Virginia Tech (including a 5-2 win on Feb. 15), 3-0 against Syracuse and 3-0 vs. Rutgers.

Prior to joining the BIG EAST, Notre Dame competed in the Midwestern Collegiate Conference in women's tennis from 1989-95. The Irish won seven consecutive league titles and Louderback was honored three times as the conference's top coach (1989, 1990, 1993). In MCC and BIG EAST play combined, the Irish have won 12 conference championships in the last 15 years.

2004 BIG EAST CHAMPIONSHIP FIELD: The second-seeded Hurricanes were listed 22nd in the preseason and peaked at 15th, but now are a season-low 26th with a 15-3 (2-1) mark. Miami has six wins over teams currently listed in the top 50: #29 Alabama, #32 Wake Forest, #36 William & Mary, #37 Pepperdine, #41 Baylor, and #48 South Alabama. The lone losses for the 'Canes were 4-3 decisions on the road against #15 Harvard (4-3), #12 UCLA (4-3), and #27 Notre Dame (5-2). Miami is 12-0 at home this season and has not lost at the Neil Schiff Tennis Complex since falling to the Irish in last year's BIG EAST final. The Hurricanes and Notre Dame have played four common opponents: Wake Forest, Virginia Tech, William & Mary, and Marquette. The Hurricanes beat all four, while the Irish fell to

NOTRE DAME IN THE BIG EAST CHAMPIONSHIP

1996 -- Champion (No. 1 seed)

Second Round

Notre Dame 4, St. John's 0

Semifinals

Notre Dame 4, Boston College 0

Final

Notre Dame 4, Miami 0

*Most Outstanding Player -- Jennifer Hall
Coach of the Year -- Jay Louderback*

1997 -- Champion (No. 1 seed)

Second Round

Notre Dame 4, Providence 0

Semifinals

Notre Dame 4, Rutgers 0

Final

Notre Dame 4, Miami 0

Coach of the Year -- Jay Louderback

1998 -- Runner-Up (No. 1 seed)

Second Round

Notre Dame 4, Georgetown 0

Semifinals

Notre Dame 4, West Virginia 0

Final

Miami 4, Notre Dame 2

1999 -- Champion (No. 1 seed)

Second Round

Notre Dame 5, Rutgers 0

Semifinals

Notre Dame 4, Syracuse 0

Final

Notre Dame 4, Miami 2

Coach of the Year -- Jay Louderback

2000 -- Runner-Up (No. 1 seed)

Second Round

Notre Dame 6, Rutgers 0

Semifinals

Notre Dame 5, Seton Hall 0

Final

Miami 5, Notre Dame 2

*Most Outstanding Player -- Michelle Dasso
Coach of the Year -- Jay Louderback*

2001 -- Champion (No. 1 seed)

Semifinals

Notre Dame 4, Virginia Tech 0

Final

Notre Dame 4, Miami 1

*Most Outstanding Player -- Michelle Dasso
Coach of the Year -- Jay Louderback*

2002 -- Runner-Up (No. 1 seed)

Semifinals

Notre Dame 4, Boston College 1

Final

Miami 4, Notre Dame 1

2003 -- Champion (No. 2 seed)

Semifinals

Notre Dame 4, Boston College 0

Final

Notre Dame 4, Miami 3

Current Irish in BIG EAST Championship

Lauren Connelly (So.)

Singles: 2-0

Doubles: 0-1

Sarah Jane Connelly (Jr.)

Singles: 2-1, 1 abandoned

Doubles: 3-0

Caylan Leslie (Sr.)

Singles: 1-2, 1 abandoned

Doubles: 1-0

Alicia Salas (Sr.)

Singles: 3-0, 1 abandoned

Doubles: 2-1

Jennifer Smith (So.)

Singles: 0-1, 1 abandoned

Doubles: 1-0

Kristina Stastny (So.)

Singles: 1-1

Doubles: 1-0

the Demon Deacons and the Tribe. The Hurricanes have played host to the BIG EAST Championship every year since 1993 and have won a conference-best seven titles in the last 12 years, losing in the final to the Irish in 1996, '97, '99, 2001, and '03. Head coach Paige Yaroshuk-Tews is in her third season leading the Miami program, having compiled a 44-18 (.710) record. She was named BIG EAST Coach of the Year in her first season, 2002, for helping the 'Canes to the conference title. Junior Megan Bradley, last year's BIG EAST Most Outstanding Tournament Player, is fourth in the ITA national singles rankings after being as high as second. She is 28-4, including 17-1 in dual matches at No. 1, losing only to Courtney Bergman of Harvard in three sets. Bradley has won 13 in a row. She and sophomore Melissa Applebaum are 36th in doubles with a 14-5 record, including 13-4 in dual matches at No. 1, though one of their defeats was an 8-6 decision against Irish freshman twins **Christian Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) and **Catrina Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.).

Boston College is the third seed in the championship for the second straight year, having a 13-5 (2-2) record and riding an eight-match winning streak. The Eagles have been ranked as high as 46th this season and currently stand 58th. B.C. defeated #22 Harvard 5-2 and also beat Yale (currently ranked 67th). Its losses all came against ranked teams, and all but one were by 4-3 scores. The Irish beat Boston College 6-1 in Blacksburg, Va., while the other Eagle defeats were against Virginia Tech (currently 71st), Fresno State (15th), San Diego State (52nd), and Long Beach State (56th). The Eagles trail only the Hurricanes with six league titles, including five straight from 1986-90. Since its last championship, B.C. has finished in the top six every year, including second in 1991, fourth in '01 and '02, and a tie for third last season. Sophomore Szilvia Szegedi of Hungary is ranked 110th in singles with a 15-4 record, including 13-4 in dual matches at No. 1. She has won seven in a row, but one of her defeats this season was a three-set affair against Irish senior co-captain **Alicia Salas** (Englewood, Colo./Cherry Creek H.S.).

Virginia Tech, the No. 4 seed, enters the tournament ranked 71st after being as high as 53rd. The Hokies are 13-12 (6-2) after starting 8-0 before losing 5-2 to Notre Dame on Feb. 15. Virginia Tech has three wins over teams currently ranked, having topped #58 Boston College (4-3), #65 Washington State, and #75 Winthrop. The Irish and Hokies played four common opponents -- William & Mary, Miami, Boston College, and VCU -- with VT beating only the Eagles and the Irish also gaining a win vs. the Rams. Since joining the conference in 2000-01, the Hokies have finished third in the BIG EAST Championship all three seasons. Sophomore Anat Elazari of Israel is 109th in the national singles rankings after being as high as 69th. She is 17-15, but has wins over Salas (currently ranked 23rd) and William & Mary's Megan Muth (24th).

Syracuse, the No. 5 seed, has won four of its last five to finish 6-11 (5-2) after a 2-10 start. The Orangewomen lost to Boston College (5-2) and Virginia Tech (7-0) in conference play, but beat Rutgers 4-3. Syracuse finished fifth in the BIG EAST tournament each of the last three years and has been in the top five for six straight seasons.

Sixth-seeded Rutgers won its final five matches -- all against conference foes -- to finish the regular season 13-7 (7-3). The Scarlet Knights dropped 4-3 decisions against Syracuse and St. John's and also lost 6-1 to Virginia Tech. Rutgers finished in a fifth-place tie a year ago, marking its best result since joining the conference in 1996.

ITA RANKINGS: After losing a third-set tiebreaker to fall 4-3 at #61 Purdue last week, Notre Dame dropped one spot to 28th in this week's Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) national rankings, which are determined by the point-per-match computer formula. It is the lowest ranking of the season for the Irish and the worst listing since falling to a program-low 48th on March 26 of last year.

Notre Dame's top singles player and top doubles team are represented in the most recent set of individual national rankings, released April 27 and also based on the ITA's computer formula. After losing in three sets last week to unranked Purdue freshman Hala Sufi, senior co-captain **Alicia Salas** (Englewood, Colo./Cherry Creek H.S.) dropped four spots to 23rd in the singles rankings, her lowest listing since being 63rd in the preseason. She is 23-15 this season, including 11-9 at No. 1 and 14-10 vs. ranked opponents. Only six seniors -- California's Raquel Kops-Jones (#1), Oklahoma's Anda Perianu (#5), Duke's Amanda Johnson (#8), Georgia's Agata Cioroch (#9), and Texas A&M's Jessica Roland (#22) and Salas -- are ranked among the nation's top 25.

Despite winning 8-2 over Purdue's team of Melissa Woods and Gretchen Haynor, freshman twins **Christian Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) and **Catrina Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) dropped six spots to 50th in the doubles listing. The Thompsons are 20-14 this season, including 11-9 at No. 1. They have four wins over ranked foes. The Thompsons are the highest-ranked all-freshman doubles team in the nation.

THIRD-SET TIEBREAKERS PROVE DECISIVE IN 4-3 IRISH LOSSES THREE TIMES IN 12 DAYS: From April 10-21, Notre Dame lost 4-3 on three occasions, dropping a third-set tiebreaker in each match. On April 10, the Irish led 3-1 before William & Mary won a trio of three-set affairs -- including in a third-set 'breaker at No. 2 -- for the come-from-behind victory. Notre Dame led 2-0 on April 15 vs. #11 Northwestern before the Wildcats took a 3-2 lead with two matches remaining. The Irish won 7-5 in the third at No. 5 just seconds after Northwestern took a third-set tiebreaker at No. 4 to clinch the win. On April 21, Notre Dame was up 3-0, but Purdue won the final four singles matches for a victory. The Boilers won in three sets at No. 1 and in a third-set tiebreaker at No. 6 after the Irish were up 4-1 and 40-15 in that match and later had a team match point.

FIVE IRISH LOSSES RESULT FROM THREE-SET STRUGGLES: After thriving on close matches a year ago, Notre Dame has struggled to win the tight ones this season, going 1-5 in contests undecided when the doubles point and two-set matches are completed -- including dropping a trio of third-set tiebreakers in 4-3 losses, as well as a 7-5 third set in another one-point defeat. Four of the last five Irish contests have been determined by three-set affairs, with the Irish winning two of three three-setters to beat #25 Miami 5-2 at home on April 4 before losing third-set tiebreakers to fall 4-3 at William & Mary, at home against #11 Northwestern, and at Purdue. In 2003, Notre Dame was 5-1 in matches undecided after the doubles point and two-set singles matches were completed, going 14-7 in those three-set affairs. This season, the Irish are just 4-12 in three-setters in undecided matches, with sophomore **Kristina Stastny** (St. Louis, Mo./St. Joseph's Academy) accounting for three of the victories. Below are brief accounts of the matches decided by three-setters this season.

* In the spring opener on Jan. 29 at Michigan, the match was tied 2-2, but Michelle DaCosta beat Irish freshman **Christian Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) at No. 2 (6-2 in third) and Leanne Rutherford topped junior **Sarah Jane Connelly** (Oklahoma City, Okla./Bishop McGuinness H.S.) at No. 5 (7-5 in 3rd) before Stastny beat Kara Delicata at No. 6 (7-5 in 3rd) to make the final score 4-3.

* With the score tied 2-2, #17 Illinois won a trio of three-setters for a 5-2 win in the Eck Tennis Pavilion on March 4. Tiffany Eklov beat Christian Thompson at No. 2 (6-1 in 3rd), while Cynthia Goulet clinched the win by topping sophomore **Lauren Connelly** (Oklahoma City, Okla./Bishop McGuinness H.S.) at No. 4 (6-3 in 3rd) and Brianna Knue beat Sarah Jane Connelly at No. 5 (6-3 in 3rd).

* Notre Dame's lone victory in a tight match came on April 4 in the Eck Tennis Pavilion against #18 Miami. Leading 3-1, #4 Megan Bradley beat #10 **Alicia Salas** (Englewood, Colo./Cherry Creek H.S.) at No. 1 (6-2 in 3rd) before Stastny topped Audrey Banada at No. 5 (6-4 in 3rd) to clinch the win and Christian Thompson beat Melissa Applebaum at No. 2 (6-3 in 3rd).

* The Irish led 3-1 on April 10 at William & Mary, but the Tribe won all three remaining matches for a 4-3 victory over Notre Dame for the second year in a row. Megan Muth, ranked 25th, upset Salas at No. 1 (6-2 in 3rd) and Amy Wei beat freshman **Catrina Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) in a third-set tiebreaker (7-3) at No. 3 before Kristen Dunbar won the final match, defeating Sarah Jane Connelly (6-3 in 3rd).

* Northwestern, ranked 11th, led 3-2 with a pair of matches left on April 15 at Notre Dame. Jamie Peisel rallied from a 4-1 deficit to win a third-set tiebreaker (7-4) over Lauren Connelly at No. 4 seconds before Stastny completed a comeback from being down 5-1 to win the third set 7-5 against Andrea Yung at No. 5.

* The Irish led 3-0 at Purdue on April 21 before the Boilermakers took the final four singles contests. Hala Sufi upset #19 Salas at No. 1 in a quick three-set affair to pull Purdue to within 3-2. After a straight-set win at No. 5, the match came down to the No. 6 match with the score tied 3-3. Sarah Jane Connelly held a 4-1, 40-15 lead, but Melissa Woods won four straight games to get back in the match. After Connelly failed to convert on a team match point at 6-5, Woods forced and won a tiebreaker.

IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE: Notre Dame has struggled this season in outdoor play, going 0-7 in matches played outside. The Irish, who hold a 10-3 record in indoor action, lost to #6 Duke (6-1) and Tennessee (6-1) in Wialoa, Hawaii over spring break before dropping outdoor road matches against Wake Forest (7-0), #9 North Carolina (5-0), William & Mary (4-3), and #14 Texas (5-2). In the lone match at the Courtney Tennis Center, #11 Northwestern edged Notre Dame 4-3 last week. The Irish have lost eight in a row outdoors, dating back to last season. Notre Dame's last victory in a match played outside was a 4-0 win against Missouri on May 9, 2003, in the first round of the NCAA Championship in Nashville, Tenn. The Irish were 4-3 in outdoor play in '03.

2004 vs. THE BIG EAST

#26 Notre Dame 6, Boston College 1

February 14, 2004 -- Blacksburg, Va. (Indoor)

Singles

No. 1: #14 Alicia Salas (ND) d. Szilvia Szegedi 2-6, 6-4, 6-2

No. 2: #88 Christian Thompson (ND) d. Nida Waseem 6-2, 7-5

No. 3: Catrina Thompson (ND) d. Allison Ashley 6-3, 6-1

No. 4: *Lauren Connelly (ND) d. Morgan Landes 6-3, 6-2

No. 5: Sarah Jane Connelly (ND) d. Lindsay Nash 6-4, 6-2

No. 6: Amy Molden (BC) d. Kristina Stastny (ND) 3-6, 6-4, 1-0 (10-6)

Doubles

No. 1: Thompson/Thompson (ND) d. Emily Hellburg/Waseem 8-3

No. 2: #39 L. Connelly/Salas (ND) d. Ashley/Szegedi 8-1

No. 3: *S.J. Connelly/Stastny (ND) d. Landes/Nash 8-3

#26 Notre Dame 5, #69 Virginia Tech 2

February 15, 2004 -- Blacksburg, Va. (Indoor)

Singles

No. 1: Anat Elazari (VT) d. #14 Alicia Salas (ND) 2-6, 6-2, 1-0 (11-9)

No. 2: *#88 Christian Thompson (ND) d. Ginger Lowdermilk (VT) 6-2, 6-4

No. 3: Catrina Thompson (ND) d. Felice Lam (VT) 6-3, 6-2

No. 4: Lauren Connelly (ND) d. Elissa Kinard (VT) 7-5, 6-2

No. 5: Ashley James (VT) d. Sarah Jane Connelly (ND) 6-3, 3-6, 1-0 (10-8)

No. 6: Kristina Stastny (ND) d. Meredith Holmes (VT) 6-0, 6-0

Doubles

No. 1: *Thompson/Thompson (ND) d. #37 Kinard/Lam (VT) 8-2

No. 2: #39 L. Connelly/Salas (ND) d. Elazari/Lowdermilk (VT) 8-4

No. 3: S.J. Connelly/Stastny (ND) d. James/Carolina Rodriguez (VT) 8-0

#27 Notre Dame 5, #18 Miami 2

April 4, 2004 -- Notre Dame, Ind. (Indoor)

Singles

No. 1: #4 Megan Bradley (M) d. #10 Alicia Salas (ND) 6-3, 1-6, 6-2

No. 2: Christian Thompson (ND) d. Melissa Applebaum (M) 1-6, 7-5, 6-3

No. 3: Mari Toro (M) d. #92 Catrina Thompson (ND) 6-0, 7-6 (7-5)

No. 4: Lauren Connelly (ND) d. Staci Stevens (M) 6-3, 6-2

No. 5: *Kristina Stastny (ND) d. Audrey Banada (M) 1-6, 6-4, 6-4

No. 6: Sarah Jane Connelly (ND) d. Sihem Bennacer (M) 6-3, 6-0

Doubles

No. 1: Thompson/Thompson (ND) d. #22 Applebaum/Bradley (M) 8-6

No. 2: L. Connelly/Salas (ND) d. Stevens/Sara Robbins (M) 8-6

No. 3: Banada/Toro (M) d. Emily Neighbours/Stastny (ND) 8-1

THOMPSONS HIGHEST-RANKED ALL-FRESHMAN DOUBLES TEAM IN NATION:

Freshman twins **Christian Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) and **Catrina Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) dropped six spots to 50th in the most recent Intercollegiate Tennis Association national doubles rankings, but remain the highest-ranked all-freshman team in the nation. Arizona State freshmen Kady Pooler and Rebecca Rankin, the only other pair of rookies to be ranked in doubles, moved back into the listing this week, at 58th. The Thompsons are 20-14 this season, including 11-9 at No. 1. The Thompsons have four wins over ranked foes, including a 9-8 (7-5) victory against the nation's second-ranked team of Cristelle Grier and Jessica Rush of Northwestern earlier this month.

THOMPSONS UPSET NATION'S #2 DOUBLES TEAM: Freshman twins **Christian Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) and **Catrina Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) defeated the #2 doubles team in the nation, Cristelle Grier and Jessica Rush of Northwestern, in dual-match play at No. 1 on April 15 at the Courtney Tennis Center. The Thompsons were victorious 9-8 (7-5), winning in a tiebreaker for the first time in five tries. The last time an Irish team upset one of the nation's top two doubles teams was Feb. 17, 2001, when current assistant coach **Michelle Dasso** and **Becky Varnum**, ranked fifth, beat Pepperdine's top-ranked pair of Ipek Senoglu and Paola Palencia 8-5 at No. 1 in 6-1 Irish victory in consolation play of the USTA/ITA National Team Indoor Championships.

STASTNY TOP PLAYER IN THE CLUTCH THIS SEASON FOR IRISH: Sophomore **Kristina Stastny** (St. Louis, Mo./St. Joseph's Academy) has been Notre Dame's best player in crunch time of tight matches this season, going undefeated in three-setters in matches that were still undecided after the doubles point and two-set singles matches were completed. In the spring opener, she beat Kara Delicata of Michigan 7-6 (7-3), 4-6, 7-5 at No. 6 to make the final score 4-3 seconds after the Wolverines clinched the victory. Twice this month she has rallied from losing the first set for a three-set triumph in a tight match against an Irish rival. On April 4, she came back to beat Audrey Banada 1-6, 6-4, 6-4 at No. 5 to clinch the 5-2 Notre Dame win over #18 Miami. Last Thursday, she trailed 5-1 in the third set before winning six straight games to defeat Andrea Yung 6-7 (0-7), 7-5, 7-5 at No. 5 seconds after #11 Northwestern won a third-set tiebreaker to clinch a 4-3 win over the Irish. Dating back to last season, Stastny has now won five in a row when involved in a three-setter in a match undecided after the two-set affairs. After going winless in her first three collegiate opportunities in the situation, she won in three against Purdue and Illinois in helping the Irish to tight victories. Stastny was 6-2 at No. 6 prior to moving up a spot in the lineup this spring. Overall, she is 10-8 in dual matches, and she finished the season on an eight-match winning streak at home.

SALAS ESTABLISHING HERSELF AS ONE OF NATION'S TOP PLAYERS: Senior co-captain **Alicia Salas** (Englewood, Colo./Cherry Creek H.S.), currently ranked 23rd after being a career-high 10th last month, has established herself as one of the elite players in college tennis this season. She stands 23-15 in singles, including 11-9 at No. 1, having

already defeated 14 ranked opponents. She has victories over #5 Amanda Johnson of Duke, #14 Jennifer McGaffigan of Illinois, #15 Luana Magnani of USC, #24 Tammy Encina of Tennessee, #29 Dianne Hollands of Arizona, #30 Dora Vastag of Indiana, #33 Alix Lacelarie of Clemson, #37 Elizabeth Exon of Michigan, #39 Megan Muth of William & Mary, #42 Jessica Rush of Northwestern, #43 Barbora Zahnova of BYU, #69 Andrea Yung of Northwestern, #79 Shana McElroy of Wisconsin, and #85 Ashley Schellhas of Vanderbilt. In addition, five more of Salas' victories were against players that were unranked at the time of the match, but now carry national rankings. She posted wins over Wisconsin's Katie McGaffigan (now 96th), Meg Racette of Iowa (now 106th), and Boston College's Szilvia Szegedi (now 110th) and as well as Exon (now 83rd) when she was unranked in the fall.

Last fall, she fought through qualifying to reach the main draw of the ITA All-American Championships in October and then gained entrance to the ITA National Intercollegiate Indoor Championships the following month due to her runner-up result in the ITA Midwest Championships. She is just the fourth Notre Dame player ever to take part in the first two legs of the collegiate grand slam, joining **Melissa Harris** ('92), **Wendy Crabtree** ('96), **Jennifer Hall** ('99), and current Irish assistant **Michelle Dasso** ('01). When she moved up to 10th in the ITA national singles rankings, Salas joined those same four as the only Notre Dame players listed among the top 10 players in college tennis since the Irish moved up to the Division I level in 1985-86.

Salas has a career 94-40 (.701) record in singles and 80-38 (.678) mark in doubles. She is 12th on the Irish career singles victories list.

SECOND TO NONE: Senior co-captain **Alicia Salas** (Englewood, Colo./Cherry Creek H.S.) and sophomore **Lauren Connelly** (Oklahoma City, Okla./Bishop McGuinness H.S.) lead the Irish in doubles wins this season, with a 21-9 record, including 15-5 in dual matches at No. 2. The duo has had a season full of streaks. Salas and Connelly opened the fall 6-1 and then won seven in a row to begin the spring. After a four-match losing skid, the pair has won eight of its last nine, including five straight. They are 8-2 at home and 10-3 against Midwest Region foes.

CLINCHING THOMPSONS: Freshman twins **Christian Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) and **Catrina Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) have combined to provide the clinching victory in seven of Notre Dame's 10 wins this season. Katrina delivered each of the first three Irish triumphs - against Ohio State, Wisconsin, and a 4-3 upset of #14 VCU -- prior to clinching the 5-2 win over #26 Indiana. Christian clinched wins over Virginia Tech, Iowa, and Marquette.

NCAA SELECTION SHOW SET FOR MAY 5 ON ESPNEWS: The selection show for the 2004 NCAA Division I Women's Tennis Championship is set for Wednesday, May 5 from 4-5 p.m. (EDT) (3-4 p.m. in South Bend). It will feature the announcement of the 64-team field for the NCAA team tournament, as well as the 64 singles players and 32 doubles teams gaining entry to the NCAA Singles & Doubles Championships. The first two rounds of the team championship will be played May 14-16 at campus sites, while the final four rounds will be May 20-23 in Athens, Ga. The individual tournaments are slated for May 24-29 in the same location. At 3 p.m. (EDT) on May 25, ESPN2 will feature a highlight show recapping the team championship.

NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS ON TV: The 2004 NCAA Division I Women's Tennis Championships will receive more television coverage than ever before. The women's team final will air on a tape-delayed basis on ESPN2 on May 25 at 3 p.m. (EDT) (2 p.m. in South Bend). The Tennis Channel will provide tape-delayed coverage of the finals of the NCAA Singles and Doubles Championships, slated to premiere on June 4 at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. (EDT) and re-air numerous times.

STREAK BUSTERS: Notre Dame's 4-3 victory at #14 Virginia Commonwealth on Feb. 13 snapped a pair of Rams' streaks. Prior to the match, VCU had not lost at home in nearly five years, boasting a 40-match winning streak that stretched back to a 5-2 defeat against Virginia Tech on March 28, 1999. In addition, the Rams had won 38 consecutive regular-season contests, dating back to a 4-3 loss to William & Mary exactly two years earlier, on Feb. 13, 2002.

ANOTHER TOP-15 UPSET: Notre Dame's 4-3 victory at #14 Virginia Commonwealth on Feb. 13 continued an impressive streak of knocking off top-15 foes. The Irish now have at least one victory over a top-15 team in each of the last 11 seasons, dating back to 1994. In '93, Notre Dame topped #19 Clemson and #19 Alabama, but was 0-5 against teams in the top 15. During the streak, the Irish have notched 20 victories over top-15 opponents, including five in 1996, highlighted by a 5-4 upset of #5 Texas, which remains the highest-ranked team ever to be defeated by Notre Dame. VCU was the highest-ranked team to fall victim to the Irish on its own home courts since Notre Dame won at #14 William & Mary 5-2 on April 13, 2002.

TWO STARTERS FROM LAST YEAR OUT FOR THE SEASON: A pair of starters from last year's Irish team are expected to miss all of this spring's dual-match season with shoulder injuries. Senior co-captain **Caylan Leslie** (Newport Beach, Calif./Corona del Mar H.S.), who played No. 1 singles a year ago and was 26th in the preseason national rankings, had to retire in her second match of the season, at last September's adidas Invitational, and she will not see further action in 2003-04. Leslie, who also missed the spring of 2002 with a shoulder injury, could apply for a fifth year of eligibility. Sophomore **Jennifer Smith** (Charlotte, N.C./South Mecklenburg H.S.), who played No. 6 singles and No. 3 doubles as a freshman, underwent shoulder surgery last fall and will miss the entire 2003-04 campaign.

IRISH FACE TOUGH SLATE: The road to the 2004 NCAA Championship is a challenging one for Notre Dame. Of the 20 dual-match opponents the Irish will face this season, 19 of them currently carry national rankings (all but Marquette), including 15 in the top 50 and 10 in the top 30. A dozen of them earned berths in last year's NCAA tournament. Eight are currently in the top 25: #4 Duke (L, 1-6), #10 Texas (L, 2-5), #11 Northwestern (L, 3-4), #14 North Carolina (L, 0-5), #20 Illinois (L, 2-5), #21 Indiana (W, 5-2), #22 BYU (W, 6-1), #23 Tennessee (L, 1-6).

SISTER ACT: For the second straight season, Notre Dame has an unprecedented two pairs of sisters on its roster in 2003-04. In 2002-03, **Liz Donohue** (Sioux Falls, S.D./O'Gorman H.S.) and **Lauren Connelly** (Oklahoma City, Okla./Bishop McGuinness H.S.) joined the Notre Dame squad as freshmen, combining with sisters **Maggie Donohue** and **Sarah Jane Connelly** (Oklahoma City, Okla./Bishop McGuinness H.S.) to mark the first time in school history that a team featured two sets of sisters at the same time. Though Maggie Donohue graduated in '03, the Connellys are joined this season by freshman twins **Catrina Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) and **Christian Thompson** (Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman H.S.) to give Notre Dame two sets of sisters once again. A total of six sets of sisters have earned monograms in women's tennis, by far the most of any of the 13 Irish women's sports.

IRISH HEAD COACH: **Jay Louderback** is in his 15th season at Notre Dame with a 265-134 (.664) record and his 25th year as a collegiate coach with a 469-312 (.601) mark. He ranks fifth among active NCAA Division I coaches in career victories. Louderback's Irish have finished in the national top 30 in each of the last 11 seasons, have won 11 conference titles and registered 20 or more victories five times in the last eight campaigns. Since the preseason of the 1995 season, Louderback's teams have been ranked in the national top 25 in 133 of 141 sets of rankings. After taking over a program looking for its first NCAA tournament appearance, Louderback has helped Notre Dame to the NAATAs 10 times in the last 11 years, including five appearances in the round of 16 and a 1996 quarterfinal

finish. Louderback, a four-time Midwest Region coach of the year, has been honored as his conference's top coach on eight occasions, including five times in eight years in the BIG EAST. In his time at Notre Dame, Louderback's players have earned All-America honors 13 times, won three national ITA awards, and earned 18 invitations to the NCAA singles championship and 10 to the NCAA doubles tournament. His players have dominated the University awards during Louderback's tenure, leading all sports in both Byron V. Kanaley awards (five) and Francis Patrick O'Connor awards (five). His family was honored with the United States Tennis Association (USTA) Tennis Family of the Year Award for 2002. The Arkansas City, Kan., native, and 1976 graduate of Wichita State arrived at Notre Dame prior to the 1989-90 season after coaching for seven years at his alma mater and three years (men and women) at Iowa State.

FORMER NATIONAL No. 1 BROOK BUCK HEADED FOR NOTRE DAME: Head coach **Jay Louderback** announced recently that **Brook Buck** (Yukon, Okla./Oklahoma Christian School) has signed a national letter of intent to enroll at Notre Dame and join his team in the fall of 2004. Buck, a three-time Oklahoma state singles champion, was ranked No. 1 in the United States Tennis Association (USTA) girls' 16-and-under national rankings in January of this year before moving up to the 18-and-under age group. She had an outstanding year of 16s junior action in 2002. In addition to being the singles runner-up at the National Hardcourt Championships, she won three national doubles titles, claiming crowns in the Winter National Championships, the Spring Supernational Championships, and the Supernational Hardcourt Championships. A senior at Oklahoma Christian School, Buck won state No. 1 singles titles in class 3A in 2001, '02, and '03, and will go for another next spring. Despite only playing in the 18-and-under division since April of this year, Buck has earned a national ranking of 28th, which places her currently as the 10th-highest-ranked player who will enroll in college next fall.

KEEPING UP WITH NOTRE DAME TENNIS: For the fastest results of Notre Dame tennis matches, call the Notre Dame sports hotline at (574) 631-3000 and choose #8. The hotline provides schedule and results information for varsity sports and serves as a supplement to the game recaps and weekly releases provided on the official athletic website at www.und.com. The hotline is the first medium updated with the results of each Notre Dame tennis match. In addition, media members and fans may be added to the sports information e-mail release list by contacting Bo Rottenborn at Rottenborn.2@nd.edu, or Eileen Carroll at ecarroll@nd.edu, who also can provide any information about the Irish tennis program.