Table of Contents

Table of Contents	4
Table of Contents/Quick Facts	1 2
2004-05 Season Preview	
2004-05 Outlook	4-5
Roster	
The Players	
Captain	8-9
Juniors10)-16
Sophomores	
	19
The Coaches	
Head Coach Jay Louderback	2-24
Assistant Coach Michelle Dasso	25
••	. 40
2003-04 Season In Review	
2003-04 Season in Review	
2003-04 Statistics	
Graduated Seniors	
	. 00
2004-05 Opponents	
On the Road With the Irish	
All-Time vs. 2005 Opponents	
Opponents	
11	
Tennis Tradition	. 40
Tennis Tradition	
Uistanu and Daganda	
History and Records	50
All-Time Results/Team Records	. 52
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards	. 52 . 53
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors	. 52 . 53 54 55
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records	. 52 . 53 54 55
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors Career Records Season Records	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History 6	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 0-61
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History 60 NCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 0-61 62
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History NCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History Collegiate Grand Slam History.	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 0-61 . 62 . 63
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History NCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History Collegiate Grand Slam History BIG EAST Championship History 64	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 0-61 . 62 . 63
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History NCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History Collegiate Grand Slam History BIG EAST Championship History 66 Facilities 66	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 0-61 . 62 . 63 1-65 6-67
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History NCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History Collegiate Grand Slam History BIG EAST Championship History 64	. 52 . 53 54 55 58 59)-61 . 62 . 63 1-65 6-67 3-70
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History Collegiate Grand Slam History. BIG EAST Championship History GAIl-Time Roster. 64 All-Time Roster. 65 Year-by-Year Results	. 52 . 53 54 55 58 59)-61 . 62 . 63 1-65 6-67 3-70
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History Soldegiate Grand Slam History BIG EAST Championship History BIG EAST Championship History Season Records Trish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History Soldegiate Grand Slam History BIG EAST Championship History Seachlities. Soldegiate Grand Slam History Seachlities. Soldegiate Grand Slam History Seachlities. Soldegiate Grand Slam History Soldegiate Grand Slam H	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 59 0-61 . 62 . 63 1-65 3-70
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History Collegiate Grand Slam History BIG EAST Championship History GAL-Tacillities 66 All-Time Roster 67 Year-by-Year Results 67 The University The University Irish All-Americans Facilities 77 Indicators of Excellence 86	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 0-61 62 63 1-65 6-67 3-70 1-76
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History Collegiate Grand Slam History. BIG EAST Championship History Garcilities Garll-Time Roster Year-by-Year Results The University Indicators of Excellence Notre Dame Leaders	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 0-61 62 63 1-65 3-70 1-76
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59)-61 . 62 . 63 1-65 3-70 1-76
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History Collegiate Grand Slam History. BIG EAST Championship History 64 Pacilities. 65 All-Time Roster. 66 All-Time Roster. 67 The University The University The University Indicators of Excellence Notre Dame Leaders Academic Services Kevin White. 86 88 88 88 88 88 88 88 88 8	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 0-61 . 62 . 63 1-65 3-70 1-76
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History RIGAA Singles/Doubles Championship History BIG EAST Champion	. 52 . 53 54 55 57 58 59 59 62 . 63 65 67 76 76 82 83 83 83 83 83
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59)-61 . 62 . 63 1-65 3-70 1-76
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History NCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History Soliegiate Grand Slam History Soliegiate Grand Slam History Gollegiate Grand Slam History Soliegiate Grand Slam History Facilities. Soliegiate Grand Slam History Facilities. Soliegiate Grand Slam History The University The University The University The University The University Soliegiate Grand Slam Soliegiate Soliegiat	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 61 62 63 63 76 76 76 82 83 93
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History MCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History Collegiate Grand Slam History. BIG EAST Championship History Gera-by-Year Results The University The University The University The University Statement of Principles Kevin White. Statement of Principles Student Development Noteworthy Alumni Alumni Association/Monogram Club. Strength & Conditioning	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 58 59)-61 62 63 1-76 82 82 83 1-85 3-79 82 83 93
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History RCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History SIG EAST Championship History BIG EAST Championship History BIG EAST Championship History Facilities Roall-Time Roster Year-by-Year Results The University The University The University Statement of Principles Statement of Principles Statement of Principles Student Development Noteworthy Alumni Alumni Association/Monogram Club Strength & Conditioning Sports Medicine Compliance	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 59 61 62 63 65 67 76 82 83 83 83 83 83 84 83 84 89 84 89 99
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History NCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History Soliegiate Grand Slam History Soliegiate Grand Slam History Gollegiate Grand Slam History Soliegiate Grand Slam History Facilities. Soliegiate Grand Slam History Facilities. Soliegiate Grand Slam History The University The University The University The University The University Soliegiate Grand Slam Grand Slam Grand Slam Grand Slam Grand Slam Grand Slam History The University The University The University Soliegiate Grand Slam Grand Slam Grand Slam Grand Slam Grand Slam History Soliegiate Gran	. 52 . 53 54 55 56 57 59 61 62 63 65 67 76 82 83 83 83 83 83 84 83 84 89 99
All-Time Results/Team Records Irish All-Americans Honors and Awards Irish Honors. Career Records Season Records Irish in the ITA Rankings All-Time Series NCAA Team Championship History RCAA Singles/Doubles Championship History SIG EAST Championship History BIG EAST Championship History BIG EAST Championship History Facilities Roall-Time Roster Year-by-Year Results The University The University The University Statement of Principles Statement of Principles Statement of Principles Student Development Noteworthy Alumni Alumni Association/Monogram Club Strength & Conditioning Sports Medicine Compliance	. 52 . 53 54 55 57 58 59 0-61 62 63 1-65 -6-67 3-79 0-81 82 83 1-85 3-89 90 91 92

Women's Tennis Quick Facts

Notre Dame Quick Facts

Location	Notre Dame, IN 46556
Founded	1842
Enrollment8,261 (und	lergraduate), 11,311 (total)
Nickname	Fighting Irish
Colors	Gold and Blue
Conference	BIG EAST
Home Courts (Outdoor)	Courtney Tennis Center
Home Courts (Indoor)	Eck Tennis Pavilion
PresidentRev.	Edward A. Malloy, C.S.C.
Athletic Director	Kevin White
Sr. Assoc. A.D./Women's Ter	nnisMissy Conboy
Athletic Department Phone	(574) 631-6107

Coaching Staff

Head Coach	Jay Louderback
	(Wichita State '76)
Office Phone	(574) 631-5149
E-mail	louderback.l@nd.edu
Record at Notre Dame	267-136 (.663)/15 years
Career Record	471-314 (.600)/25 years
Assistant CoachMichelle	e Dasso (Notre Dame '01)
Office Phone	(574) 631-3730
E-mail	dasso.2@nd.edu
Volunteer Asst. CoachLiz E	Balanis (Wake Forest '94)
Coaches' Fax	(574) 631-8728
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Website	

Notre Dame Sports Hotline:

(574) 631-3000

Irish Women's Tennis Guide Fourth In Nation

The 2003-04 Notre Dame Women's Tennis Guide was voted the fourth-best women's tennis media guide among all NCAA Division I schools in judging coordinated by the College Sports Information Directors of America. It was ranked fifth among all tennis guides, with both finishes marking the best-ever for Notre Dame, though the guide has been second in the district three times in the last five years. The award-winning publication was written and edited by assistant sports information director Bo Rottenborn with typography and page layout by Cindy Rajski of Ave Maria Press.



Athletic Résumé.

Senior Sarah Jane Connelly (middle) will serve as the captain of the 2004-05 Irish guided by assistant coach Michelle Dasso (left) and head coach Jay Louderback (right).



Media Information

The Notre Dame Sports Information office always is interested in assisting members of the media in their coverage of Irish women's tennis. Publicity and media information for Notre Dame women's tennis is handled by assistant sports information director Bo Rottenborn.

Photographs, feature ideas, and results are always available from the Notre Dame Sports Information office. For information and interviews, please contact Rottenborn at (574) 631-7516 or e-mail him at rottenborn.2@nd.edu, or view the official website of the Notre Dame athletic department at www.und.com. All interviews with coaches and athletes should be arranged through the Sports Information Office.

BIG EAST Conference

The BIG EAST Conference maintains its presence on the World Wide Web at www.bigeast.org. The site contains current information on all facets of the BIG EAST Conference. Please contact Ann Raymond in the BIG EAST media relations department (araymond@bigeast.org) for more information on BIG EAST tennis.

Credits

The Notre Dame Women's Tennis Guide was written and edited by assistant sports information director Bo Rottenborn with editorial assistance from former student assistant Eileen Carroll, sports information assistant Sean Carroll, and student assistants Kevin Smigielski, Ashley Thornburg, Corey Walton, and Drew Whang.

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WNDU-TV - NBC

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(Charlie Adams/Greg Carroll) 300 West Jefferson South Bend, IN 46601 (574) 472-8124 Fax (574) 288-6630

WSIV-TV - FOX

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Sophomores Catrina (left) and

Christian Thompson

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Senior captain Sarah Jane Connelly

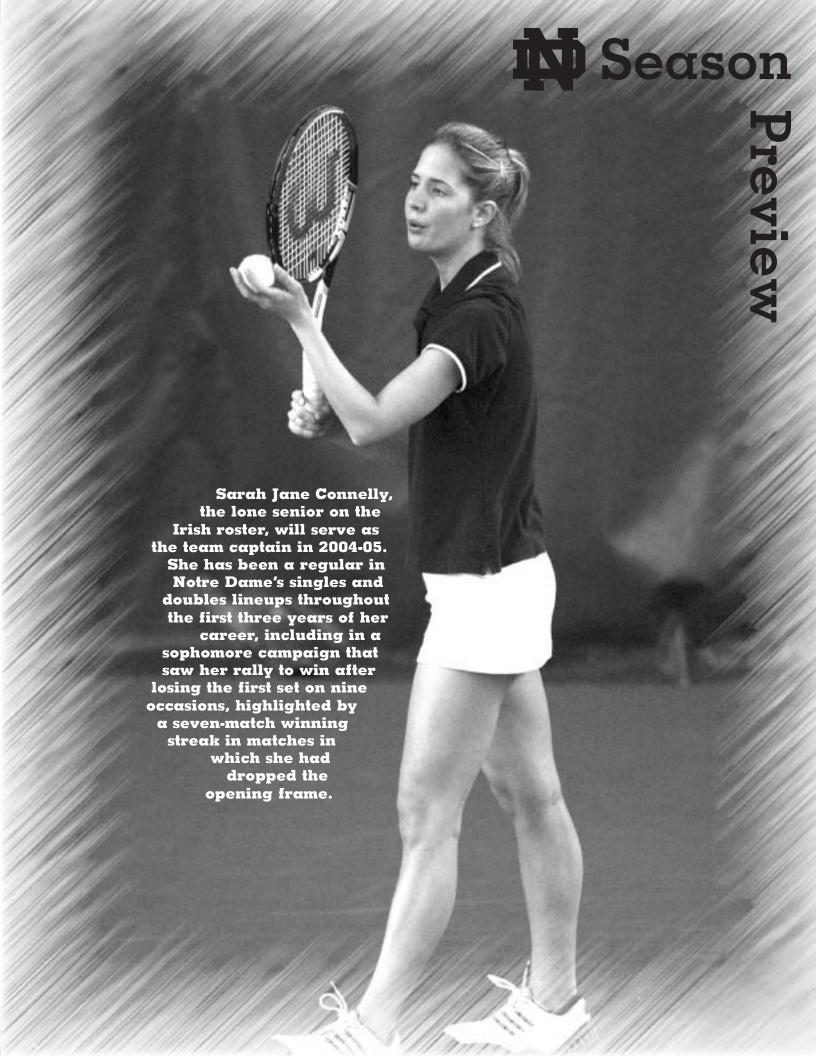
Juniors (clockwise, from bottom left) Kristina Stastny, Kelly Nelson, Jennifer Smith, Lauren Connelly, and Liz Donohue



Freshmen Brook Buck (left) and Bailey Louderback







Season IN

Irish Goal in 2004-05: Every Position a Strength

Irish look to be solid up and down the lineups in both singles and doubles

According to head coach Iav Louderback, the key to the 2004-05 season for the Notre Dame women's tennis team is for the Irish to be strong at every position in both the singles and doubles lineups.

"The big thing this year is for us to simply concentrate on being more consistent all the way down our lineup," says Louderback. "Over the last couple of years, we have either been really good at the top or really good at the bottom, but overall consistency has been lacking. This year, I also think we have a chance to have three good doubles teams again, ones that may be better than last year's, which were really good. We have a lot of depth again, so there's no reason we shouldn't be really good at Nos. 5 and 6 singles, and I think we will be."

The Irish return eight monogram winners and six players who have been regular starters in at least one of the last two seasons from a sauad that went 12-12 against a brutal schedule in 2003-04, but still was the runner-up in the BIG EAST Conference, reached the second round of the NCAA Championship, and finished ranked 27th in the nation.

"Last year was a bit up and down," says Louderback. "But the good part was that we got a lot of players good experience. Both of our freshmen played high and did really well, and all three of our doubles teams were good. This year we have a lot of people with experience, as well as a freshman who is going to come in and contribute immediately."

Notre Dame will once again face an extremelydifficult schedule, as 20 of the 21 teams on the slate were ranked among the top 60 in last year's final

TEAM INFORMATION

2003-04 Record: 12-12

2003-04 Final ITA National Ranking: 27th

2004 BIG EAST Championship:

1-1, runner-up Notre Dame 4, Virginia Tech 0 Miami 4, Notre Dame 0

2004 NCAA Championship:

1-1, second round Notre Dame 4, Iowa 1 #9 Northwestern 4, Notre Dame 1

Starters Returning:

Sarah Jane Connelly (Sr.) Lauren Connelly (Jr.) Kristina Stastny (Jr.) Catrina Thompson (So.) Christian Thompson (So.)

Monogram Winners Returning/Lost: 8/3

2004-05 Captain: Sarah Jane Connelly

Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) national rankings and 18 earned berths in the 2004 NCAA Championship. Nearly half of the '05 dual-match schedule - 10 teams - will be against squads that ended last year among the top 25.

"Our schedule is going to be tough," says Louderback. "Last year it was really tough; we had to beat a couple of top-15 teams just to not have a losing record. This year it's going to be the same, but I think that's better. I don't really care if we get 20 wins every year; we could schedule where we're going to win 18 or 20 matches every year, but for us to be very good at the end - our goal is that we want to win the BIG EAST Championship and do really well at the NCAA tournament – we have to play α tough

The top players for the Irish this season figure to be the sophomore twins Christian and Catrina Thompson, who stepped in as rookies to play Nos. 2 and 3 singles, as well as No. 1 doubles, and posted a winning mark at each position. After no all-rookie team had played even one match at No. 1 for the Irish since 1993, the sisters filled the slot all season and notched five victories against nationally-ranked opponents, including an upset of the #2 squad in the country, Cristelle Grier and Jessica Rush Northwestern. The freshman team from any while also being a starter in singles. Division I school since 1998 to earn an invitation to the NCAA

Doubles Championship, where they upset the 15thranked squad in the opening round before falling in three sets in the round of 16. They begin their second season ranked seventh in the nation after finishing 26th a year ago.

"They have the potential to be the best doubles team we have ever had at Notre Dame," says Louderback. "Their biggest advantage is that they are so good playing together; they've played together since they were born. It's hard to play with someone that long, but they do a good job of it. Potentially, they could be one of the better doubles teams in the country, especially since they now have some college experience. I've had some good doubles teams in the past, but I don't know that anyone could compare to what these two are doing right now, especially with them being only sophomores. They play doubles like you should play dou-

Last season, Christian Thompson became the first rookie since 1998 to play in the top two of the Irish singles lineup, and she responded by leading the team in overall singles victories with a 25-13



Thompsons, who finished 22-17 Junior Lauren Connelly is one of the many talented doubles players on the Irish, overall, became the first all- as she posted a 47-20 (.701) record in partnered play in her first two seasons,

record, while going 13-8 in dual action to make No. 2 the winningest position in the Notre Dame lineup. She posted five victories against ranked foes and was listed as high as 88th in the national rankings.

"We're trying to get Christian to improve on a couple of things: getting more pace on her volleys so she can end points with them and making her serve more of a weapon," says Louderback. "She tends to make a lot of balls, she places them well, she runs people around, but she doesn't finish points as well as she should, especially at the net. Her serve is pretty consistent, but it doesn't get her any free points, so we're trying to change that. But she competes really well. She's very fast, and we are expecting her to play high and do well for us."

Catrina Thompson filled the No. 3 slot in her first collegiate campaign and finished 20-15 overall and 12-10 in dual action. She was nationally ranked in both singles and doubles at one point, and she begins her second season 103rd in the ITA preseason rankings after being as high as 84th last



"Catrina has made a huge jump," says Louderback. "She has a big game: a huge forehand, a very big serve, and she's aggressive in starting to come to the net more. She has become more consistent with her serve and her forehand. Last year, if those two things were working, she could beat anyone. Right now she's playing a huge game and is making her forehand most of the time while still hitting it hard. She also has cut down on double faults, which will make a huge difference in her game. She is going to be able to play high for us and do really well."

Freshman Brook Buck also is expected to immediately step in and make an impact in the top or middle of the Notre Dame lineups. In 2002, she was the top-ranked 16-and-under player in the United States in both singles and doubles. Buck became just the fourth player ever to win four Oklahome state championships at No. 1 singles, and she was ranked 11th in the USTA 18-and-under rankings before coming to Notre Dame. She has to her credit eight USTA super national titles, five in doubles and three in singles.

"Brook has a lot of national junior experience and is a very good athlete. She has a big backhand and is working to become more consistent on her forehand. She also has a very good serve and is a great doubles player that volleys really well. She tends to like to hit too many ground strokes, which is what most juniors do coming into college. Once she starts coming to the net more, she is going to be very, very good."

Junior Jennifer Smith, who missed all of last season with a shoulder injury, will be back for the Irish in 2004-05, looking to regain the form that saw her win 21 matches in doubles and earn time in the singles lineup as a rookie.

Junior Lauren Connelly was one of Notre Dame's most consistent doubles players last season, while also filling the No. 4 spot in singles. She led the Irish in doubles wins in 2003-04, going 26-8, including 18-5 in dual action at No. 2. Heading into the second half of her collegiate career, she boasts a 47-20 (.701) doubles record, including 33-12 (.733) in dual matches. Connelly has been ranked as high as 36th in doubles and also has been a two-year starter in singles.

"Lauren played really well for us last year at No. 4," says Louderback. "She is just a great competitor. We are constantly working on her serve, because if she is serving well, she is usually playing well. But if she's giving away free points on her serve, she struggles. Lauren is very aggressive; she's not afraid to come in. She has a big backhand, but she will come in on just about anything, which is a good move, because she has good reach and volleys well."

Another junior, Kristina Stastny, also returns for the Irish after being a regular in both singles and doubles during most of her first two seasons. Last year, she played mostly No. 5 singles and No. 3 doubles and was Notre Dame's top clutch player in singles, going unbeaten in a trio of three-set matches with the team outcome still undetermined.

"Kiki has made perhaps as big a jump as anyone this fall," says Louderback. "She worked hard all summer, played a couple tournaments, and worked very hard on being more consistent while being aggressive. She's always been aggressive and would like to come in, but she's been inconsistent

with doing it in the past. Her approach shots are key for her, and she is hitting them well, where in the past, she would sometimes set up a point, get an easy ball, and miss it. She will be very important for us, because she is going to be a person in the middle of our lineup that we need to win."

Sarah Jane Connelly Lauren's older sister - is the lone senior on this year's Irish, and she will serve as the squad's captain. She has been a regular in both singles and doubles throughout her career, playing all around the bottom half of the lineups. As a sophomore, Connelly established herself as an extremely difficult player to beat, as she won nine times when dropping the opening set, including a stretch of seven consecutive victories in contests in which she surrendered the opening frame. Last season, Connelly played mostly No. 6 singles and No. 3 doubles.

"The biggest thing for Sarah Jane is to stay calm on the court," says Louderback. "She sometimes starts analyzing things a little too much; she needs to just go out and play. We have worked on her footwork to get into better position to hit her backhand. We're also working on her serve a lot. I expect her to be a leader for us this season, and I think she'll do an unbelievable job as our captain. She has been a great team player throughout her career, doing whatever we needed her to do. If she wins, but the team loses, she is not happy



at all. Sarah Jane is a great example of doing her best at whatever the team needs."

Junior Liz Donohue challenged for a spot in Notre Dame's singles lineup during all of 2003-04, eventually getting into a pair of tilts at No. 6 (going 1-1). Continued improvement has put her into a position to make a serious challenge for a spot in the lineup this season.

"Liz had injuries this summer and didn't get to play much, so she will need to take advantage of being back in action," says Louderback. "She is very fast on the court and makes you play a lot of balls. We have been working on her forehand, but her backhand is very good, and she has a great serve. She competes really well and she's going to be battling for a spot in the lineup because of that. She's hard to play, because she never gives you the same look. She can give you junk or step in and hit it"

Another junior, Jennifer Smith, also will be in the mix for playing time. She was a starter at No. 3 doubles as a rookie and also saw a good portion of action at No. 6 singles. Poised to possibly play a greater role in her second year, she suffered a season-ending shoulder injury in the fall and did not play a match in 2003-04.

"Jen is coming off shoulder surgery, and she was able to hit a lot this summer for the first time," says Louderback. "This fall, we will work on her getting to play more, which is necessary for her to regain her form. She's hitting the ball very well and has been playing well in practice. As soon as she gets some match experience, she is going to be right there in the mix for a spot in the lineup. We're very excited to have her back. She's working very hard."

Junior Kelly Nelson, like Donohue, has made great improvements throughout her career, and she also should be in a position to make a run at a starting spot. She has been solid in fall action throughout her career, going 22-12, but is still looking to crack into the dual-match lineup for the first time. Nelson was struck by injury over the summer, which will make regaining her previous form the top priority.

"Kelly worked hard all summer on her serve and on being more aggressive," says Louderback. "Her ground strokes are very good, she doesn't make many errors, and she's a solid doubles player. But injuries will keep her from playing until at least January. That is disappointing, because she had put herself into a position to have a shot at playing. She competes really well, especially under pressure, which is a big thing. Having her out at practice every day is always great, because she works hard and does whatever you need her to do."

Rounding out the Irish roster will be freshman Bailey Louderback, the daughter of Notre Dame's head coach. A South Bend native and 2003 graduate of Penn High School, where she was the team's top player, Louderback joins the Irish after taking a year off to train.

"The big thing for Bailey will simply be to get experience and work on raising the level of her game," says Louderback, the 11th Irish coach to have a son or daughter on his team. "She switched to a one-handed backhand a year and a half ago, and that is still a work in progress. But her backhand slice and her volleys have improved. Her serve and forehand are good, and she is working on getting a little quicker, which will be necessary for her to move to the next level."



2004-05 The 2004 Dame wome team (front left) Catalogue

The 2004-05 Notre Dame women's tennis team (front row, from left) Catrina Thompson, Bailey Louderback, Christian Thompson, Kristina Stastny, Kelly Nelson, and assistant coach Michelle Dasso. (back row, from left) Senior manager Tommy Horn, Brook Buck, Liz Donohue, Lauren Connelly, Sarah Jane Connelly, Jennifer Smith, volunteer assistant coach Liz Balanis, and head coach Jay Louderback.



2004-05 Notre Dame Women's Tennis Roster

Alphabetical					
No.		<u>Player</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Yr.</u>	Hometown/High School
7		Brook Buck	5-7	Fr.	Yukon, OK/Oklahoma Christian School
4	**	Lauren Connelly	5-9	Jr.	Oklahoma City, OK/Bishop McGuinness H.S.
11	***	Sarah Jane Connelly (c)	5-9	Sr.	Oklahoma City, OK/Bishop McGuinness H.S.
8	**	Liz Donohue	5-8	Jr.	Sioux Falls, SD/O'Gorman H.S.
5		Bailey Louderback £	5-6	Fr.	South Bend, IN/Penn H.S.
6	**	Kelly Nelson	5-7	Jr.	St. Petersburg, FL/Shorecrest Preparatory School
84	**	Jennifer Smith	5-9	Jr.	Charlotte, NC/South Mecklenburg H.S.
26	**	Kristina Stastny £	5-6	Jr.	St. Louis, MO/St. Joseph's Academy
13	*	Catrina Thompson	5-5	So.	Las Vegas, NV/Bishop Gorman H.S.
31	*	Christian Thompson	5-6	So.	Las Vegas, NV/Bishop Gorman H.S.

Head Coach: #20 Jay Louderback (Wichita State '76) Assistant Coach: #14 Michelle Dasso (Notre Dame '01) Volunteer Assistant Coach: #15 Liz Balanis (Wake Forest '94)

Senior Manager: #00 Tommy Horn (Notre Dame '05)

Numerical						
1	No.		Player	Ht.	<u>Yr.</u>	Hometown/High School
	4	**	Lauren Connelly	5-9	Jr.	Oklahoma City, OK/Bishop McGuinness H.S.
	5		Bailey Louderback £	5-6	Fr.	South Bend, IN/Penn H.S.
	6	**	Kelly Nelson	5-7	Jr.	St. Petersburg, FL/Shorecrest Preparatory School
	7		Brook Buck	5-7	Fr.	Yukon, OK/Oklahoma Christian School
	8	**	Liz Donohue	5-8	Jr.	Sioux Falls, SD/O'Gorman H.S.
	11	***	Sarah Jane Connelly (c)	5-9	Sr.	Oklahoma City, OK/Bishop McGuinness H.S.
	13	*	Catrina Thompson	5-5	So.	Las Vegas, NV/Bishop Gorman H.S.
	26	**	Kristina Stastny £	5-6	Jr.	St. Louis, MO/St. Joseph's Academy
	31	*	Christian Thompson	5-6	So.	Las Vegas, NV/Bishop Gorman H.S.
	84	**	Jennifer Smith	5-9	Jr.	Charlotte, NC/South Mecklenburg H.S.

^{* –} denotes monograms earned

c – denotes captain £ – indicates left-handed player

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Stastny STASS-nee Dasso DASS-o Balanis buh-LAWN-iss

ROSTER BREAKDOWN

Seniors (1): S.J. Connelly

Juniors (5): L. Connelly, Donohue, Nelson, Smith, Stastny

Sophomores (2): Thompson, Thompson Freshmen (2): Buck, Louderback

