

2008 Preview



Notre Dame returns a pair of all-BIG EAST performers in senior Justine Stremick and junior Serinity Phillips from last season, and will kickoff the 2008 slate by hosting the Shamrock Invitational.



Veteran Roster Poised for Return to NCAA Tournament

Stacked lineup provides Notre Dame with depth, talent and experience

With four highly-touted freshmen joining a well-oiled roster, the 2008 edition of Notre Dame volleyball looks to bounce back after a 15-13 campaign last season. A pair of all-BIG EAST performers in senior middle blocker Justine Stremick and junior outside hitter Serenity Phillips and 2007 AVCA Northeast Freshman of the Year Kellie Sciacca will help power the Irish charge back to the NCAA Tournament, a place Notre Dame has not been since 2006.

Despite losing outside hitter Adrianna Stasiuk (3.28 kills/game, 3.43 digs/game) and setter Ashley Tarutis (10.71 assists/game), junior Christina Kaelin and senior Mallorie Croal return from the injured list and are immediately expected to fill the void left by Stasiuk. Junior Jamel Nicholas, who shared time with Tarutis over the last two seasons, takes the reins of an Irish offense that sat among the league leaders in hitting percentage in 2007.

Croal was hampered by an ankle injury for the duration of last season, but the 2006 all-BIG EAST player is hoping to make her final season in an Irish uniform her best yet. Croal saw action in only 11 games as a junior after being a solid contributor (3.00 kills/game) her sophomore season.

"Mallorie is one of the best leaders I've ever had," said Irish head coach Debbie Brown. "She is a great natural leader and always knows the right things to say. She knows how to pump the team up and how to calm them down. Mallorie makes the people around her that much better, and she can play the whole game."



Serenity Phillips, who was selected to the all-BIG EAST preseason team, will lead a deep group of outside hitters for the Irish.

enthusiasm and energy for the team, Fesl will contribute from the outside with Phillips and Kaelin to keep the points coming from all angles for the Irish.

"I'm most excited about the outside hitting on the team since we were relatively down in that area last season," said Brown. "I think that's the position with which we're going to have tremendous depth."

The loss of Tarutis at the setter spot will be offset by the efforts of Nicholas and freshman Beth Wildermuth. Nicholas has seen ample time on the floor since stepping on campus and will help nurture Wildermuth into the system.

Sophomores Angela Puente and Megan Dunne are expected to vie for time at the defensive specialist/libero position with freshman Frenchy Silva. Each of the three are solid passers with good footwork, and the competition for playing time has pushed the trio to improve as a group.

"Angela has developed her game tremendously during the offseason," Brown noted. "She got a lot of experience coming in and starting at libero as a freshman. That's a tough spot, and she saw a lot of serves come her way. She has good confidence going into this season. Angela and Megan (Dunne) are good friends and they continue to push each other. It's great to see how they've made each other better. Both of them have great attitudes and they're there for each other. The improvements they've made are compliments of one another.

"Frenchy is an amazingly fast and quick player and can run anything down. She and Beth (Wildermuth) have been playing together for several years (on the same club team). Their chemistry and the joy they get out of playing together is evident."

A pair of middle blockers – Sciacca and JVDA All-American Megan Barnicle – should see considerable time in the rotation. Sciacca, one of the best offensive middles on the team, is looking to improve upon a record-breaking freshmen campaign. As a member of the JVDA national championship team, Barnicle can certainly parlay her prep success into solid contributions during her first season with the squad.

"Kellie was so fun to watch as a freshman and it was amazing to hear so many coaches ask 'Who is that middle?' throughout the year," said Brown. "Her sophomore year can be tremendous for her. She's improving the details of her blocking to become a huge factor for us.

"Megan (Barnicle) benefited from being on an incredible junior team. She did a great job as one of their starting middle blockers. Whether attacking, blocking, or serving, she plays with a lot of poise and confidence. She brings a lot of big match experience to the team."

Sophomore Stephanie Slatt and freshman Kristen Dealy supply the Irish with a couple more strong arms to swing on the outside. Slatt was a pleasant

As one of the most improved players within the program, Stremick has made the jump from playing strictly high school ball (she had minimal club experience) to starting for a top-20 program. The efficient attacker will anchor the front line for the Irish after establishing herself as one of the league's – and nation's – top shot blockers. Her .706 clip against Rutgers (Oct. 6) was the sixth-highest of any league player in any match throughout the season and the fourth-best in league play (that average ranks 13th all-time in Irish history). She finished five matches with a hitting average greater than .500 in 2007 while registering 1.58 blocks/game against league opponents.

The six-person junior class consists of Phillips, Kaelin, Nicholas, outside hitter Megan Fesl (3.12 kills/game), and middle blockers Tara Enzweiler and Kim Kristoff. One of the most decorated recruiting classes in Irish history, the group should be the core of Notre Dame's run into the NCAAs this year.

Enzweiler is one of the team's most efficient blockers with quick feet and great hands over the net. She shares the net with Kristoff, who is not only a force for the Irish defense but has developed a svelte serving stroke (five aces against DePaul in 2007). Fesl sat out during the spring season but has since been unleashed and is back on the court again as a solid six-rotation player. While providing the

Team Information

Overall record (2007):	15-13
Home record	9-4
Road record	4-6
Neutral record	2-3
BIG EAST regular season finish:	9-5, 4th
BIG EAST Tournament finish:	t-3rd
vs. Cincinnati (W, 3-1) / vs. Louisville (L, 3-0)	
Last postseason appearance:	2006 NCAA
	Tournament
Last postseason opponent:	Wisconsin (L, 3-0)
Starters returning / lost:	4 / 2
Liberos returning / lost:	2 / 0
Monogram winners returning / lost:	11 / 2
Top returnees:	Justine Stremick / MB / Sr.
	Serenity Phillips / OH / Jr.
	Kellie Sciacca / MB / So.
Key losses:	Adrianna Stasiuk / OH
	Ashley Tarutis / S
Newcomers:	Megan Barnicle / MB
	(St. Francis / Winfield, Ill.)
	Kristen Dealy / OH
	(Santa Barbara / Santa Barbara, Calif.)
	Frenchy Silva / L
	(Dana Hills / Laguna Niguel, Calif.)
	Beth Wildermuth / S
	(Santa Margarita / San Clemente, Calif.)
All-BIG EAST returnees:	Phillips, Stremick
All-AVCA Northeast Region returnee: ..	Sciacca



surprise for the team during spring ball, as she was able to see more playing time and gained more confidence against a stacked schedule.

"Stephanie is completely comfortable with what she can bring to this team," said Brown. "She has developed an incredibly tough serve. We tried to use it some last fall, and now we believe she can use that as a steady weapon for us."

"Kristen got better and better throughout her senior year of high school. We were able to see her play and she impressed us as a solid six-roation player. She brings so many shots to the table – a good line, tip and cross-court shot – and she's willing to mix it up. Her backrow skills are very strong. I've never seen her play beach volleyball, but she's played quite a bit on the sand and that's helped develop her game as well."

The Captains

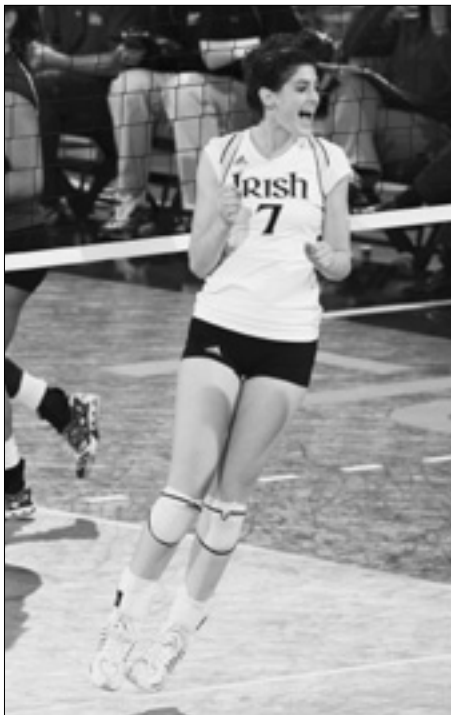
Nicholas and Croal will serve as team captains this season. Croal was one of three tri-captains in 2007.

"I couldn't be more excited about the leadership and the captains on this team," Brown acknowledged. "Mallorie is one of the best leaders we've had in a long time. The thing that is remarkable about her is that she continued to lead the team through her injury last year. Jamel has improved her leadership tremendously and has taken a strong initiative to keep the team on the same page at all times. She makes sure everyone is working hard...not that they need to be pushed a whole lot, but Jamel can get that little something extra out of them."

The Schedule

Seven teams that earned bids to last year's NCAA Tournament – including Final Four participant California – highlight the team's schedule for the 2008 season

Notre Dame will host a pair of tournaments at the Joyce Center in 2008, kicking things off with the Shamrock Invitational (Aug. 29-31). IPFW, Nevada,



Sophomore Kellie Sciacca – who was the AVCA Northeast Region Freshman of the Year in 2007 – is one of five middle blockers on the Irish roster.

and Valparaiso will comprise the field in the three-day event, as Notre Dame will face each of those teams over the course of the tournament.

"I'm excited about being able to host two tournaments with the way the schedule worked out for the upcoming season," said Brown. "We were able to put together a schedule that afforded us the opportunity to play 13 home dates in addition to venturing out to face some of the nation's top programs. Our record at home has been pretty good over the past several years, so as many times as we can play at home the better it is for us. I think that with the combination of our home games along with a solid conference road ahead of us, this is a schedule that will allow us to do some really big things."

In the friendly confines of the Joyce Center, Notre Dame has posted an all-time record of 198-37 (.843) under Brown since she took over the reins of the program in 1991.

The team will hit the road for the Idaho Volleyball Classic (Sept. 5-6) held in Moscow, Idaho, for the program's first-ever visit to the Gem State. The host Vandals will also entertain Eastern Washington and Washington State that weekend.

Three ranked teams in Cal Poly, California, and Minnesota await the Irish when the Gophers host the Diet Coke Classic from Sept. 12-14. Both Cal Poly (11th) and California (4th) found spots in the final 2007 CSTV/AVCA Division I Coaches Top 25 poll, with the Bears falling to eventual national champion Penn State in the post-season tournament's semifinal round.

"This tournament (at Minnesota) may pose one of our biggest challenges of the year," Brown noted. "The field is made up of some really strong teams, and luckily we'll have the opportunity to play some matches beforehand to get us better prepared for such a talented group."

After welcoming Liberty, UC Irvine, and Western Michigan to the Golden Dome Invitational (Sept. 19-21), the Irish will spend the next two weekends on the road to start the BIG EAST Conference portion of their schedule. Trips to South Florida (Sept. 26), Georgetown (Sept. 28), Louisville (Oct. 4) and Cincinnati (Oct. 5) will be trailed by an Oct. 11-12 home twinbill with West Virginia and Pittsburgh.

"The BIG EAST keeps getting better and better every year and this season will be no exception," said Brown. "I think it's going to be a really good year for the BIG EAST and we'll have our hands full with that. I do think we're preparing ourselves well before we enter that part of this season's schedule."

"It'll be tough heading out to play Louisville and Cincinnati on the road. Those were two key wins for us here at home down the stretch last year and we'll have to win them again if we want to be competing for the regular-season conference title as well as the tournament crown."

The Irish travel to Long Beach State – a team that was ranked 23rd at the end of last season – on Oct. 21 and resume conference play with matches on each of the next four weekends leading up to the league tournament, which will be hosted by Pittsburgh in the Fitzgerald Fieldhouse from Nov. 21-23.

Xavier (Nov. 28) is slated to visit Notre Dame prior to the NCAA Tournament (Dec. 4-20). This year's final and semifinal matches will be played at the Qwest Center in Omaha, Neb.



With a solid senior season Justine Stremick could become only the fourth player in Notre Dame history to lead the team in blocks-per-game in three consecutive seasons.

The League

Stremick and Phillips each found a spot on the BIG EAST Conference's preseason volleyball team. Both were second-team all-BIG EAST performers in 2007.

Louisville was the top choice in preseason coaches' poll. Eight of the BIG EAST's 15 head coaches gave Louisville first-place votes, edging out defending conference champion St. John's, which had four first-place tallies. Notre Dame received one first-place vote as Cincinnati collected a pair.

It is the second time Louisville has been pegged as preseason favorites in the conference, with the other coming in 2005 – the school's first year competing in the BIG EAST. St. John's shared the BIG EAST regular-season championship last year with Louisville as both finished 13-1 in conference play. USF's Marcela Gurgel was the only unanimous All-BIG EAST Preseason Team selection.

The Irish had been the top pick in the preseason voting the past two seasons. Last year, Notre Dame posted a 9-5 BIG EAST record, tying them for third, and a 15-13 record overall. The overall mark locked in their 21st consecutive winning season under the direction of Brown.

"With the improvement each team makes year after year, the conference is getting much more competitive," said Brown. "It always makes for an exciting season when league play gets underway."

BIG EAST play will start with a 14-game opening weekend Sept. 26-28. The BIG EAST's 15 volleyball teams play every league school once for a 14-game schedule. The top eight finishers in the BIG EAST standings based on winning percentage advance to the BIG EAST Volleyball Championship in Pittsburgh's Fitzgerald Field House.

First-round action of the BIG EAST Volleyball Championship will begin on Nov. 21. The event spans three days and is single elimination. ESPN will televise the championship game on Nov. 23. The tournament champion will receive the league's automatic bid to the NCAA's 28th Annual Division I Women's Volleyball Championship.

Preseason Notes

BIG EAST Volleyball Preseason Coaches Poll

Team / 2007 Overall Record

1. Louisville (8) / 22-8
2. St. John's (4) / 33-4
3. Cincinnati (2) / 19-12
4. **Notre Dame (1) / 15-13**
5. USF / 19-10
6. Connecticut / 19-11
7. Pittsburgh / 15-16
8. Marquette / 10-16
9. Villanova / 14-14
10. Seton Hall / 16-12
11. Syracuse / 21-13
12. Georgetown / 5-27
13. DePaul / 7-21
14. West Virginia / 16-14
15. Rutgers / 3-22

(x) - indicates first-place votes

CBS College Sports Network / AVCA Division I Coaches Top 25 Preseason Poll

Rank	School (first-place votes)	Total Points	2007 Record	2007 Final Rank
1	Penn State (59)	1498	34-2	1
2	Stanford	1431	32-3	2
3	Texas	1360	27-4	6
4	Southern California	1229	29-5	3
5	California	1214	26-8	4
6	UCLA	1188	23-11	7
7	Nebraska (1)	1161	30-2	5
8	Florida	1025	29-3	8
9	Washington	944	27-4	10
10	Cal Poly	849	23-8	11
11	Oregon	797	22-11	9
12	Hawaii	781	27-6	18
13	Wisconsin	765	26-5	14
14	Kansas State	665	23-9	16
15	Middle Tennessee	479	35-3	15
16	Minnesota	446	18-13	NR
17	Colorado State	363	23-8	NR
18	Iowa State	328	19-14	17
19	Clemson	303	29-4	22
20	BYU	292	24-8	17
21	LSU	276	25-8	NR
22	San Diego	271	21-8	25
23	New Mexico State	229	26-6	21
24	Long Beach State	220	26-7	23
25	Purdue	190	19-14	NR

Receiving votes: St. John's 180; Michigan 177; Pepperdine 113; Dayton 98; Michigan State 80; Louisville 66; Santa Clara 65; Ohio 62; Texas A&M 55; Utah 45; Illinois 44; Missouri 42; Tulane 38; Arizona 31; Duke 18; Kentucky 16; Oklahoma 15; Wichita State 14; Georgia Tech 8; Western Kentucky 6

Breakdown by...

Class

Senior (2)	Mallorie Croal Justine Stremick
Junior (6)	Tara Enzweiler Megan Fesl Christina Kaelin Kim Kristoff Jamel Nicholas Serinity Phillips
Sophomore (4)	Megan Dunne Angela Puente Kellie Sciacca Stephanie Slatt
Freshman (4)	Megan Barnicle Kristen Dealy Frenchy Silva Beth Wildermuth

Height

6-3	Justine Stremick
6-1	Mallorie Croal Megan Fesl Kim Kristoff Kellie Sciacca Stephanie Slatt
6-0	Megan Barnicle Kristen Dealy
5-11	Serinity Phillips
5-10	Tara Enzweiler Christina Kaelin
5-8	Beth Wildermuth
5-7	Jamel Nicholas
5-6	Angela Puente
5-4	Megan Dunne Frenchy Silva

Position

Outside Hitter (6)	Mallorie Croal Kristen Dealy Megan Fesl Christina Kaelin Serinity Phillips Stephanie Slatt
Middle Blocker (5)	Megan Barnicle Tara Enzweiler Kim Kristoff Kellie Sciacca Justine Stremick
Setter (2)	Jamel Nicholas Beth Wildermuth
Libero / DS (3)	Megan Dunne Angela Puente Frenchy Silva

State

California (6)	Mallorie Croal Kristen Dealy Serinity Phillips Angela Puente Frenchy Silva Beth Wildermuth
Colorado (1)	Kellie Sciacca
Illinois (3)	Megan Barnicle Megan Dunne Megan Fesl
Indiana (1)	Kim Kristoff
Kentucky (1)	Christina Kaelin
North Carolina (1)	Tara Enzweiler
North Dakota (1)	Justine Stremick
Pennsylvania (1)	Jamel Nicholas
Washington (1)	Stephanie Slatt



Front (l-r): Megan Fesl, Kim Kristoff, Kellie Sciacca, Justine Stremick, Mallorie Croal, Stephanie Slatt, Kristen Dealy
Back (l-r): Frenchy Silva, Megan Dunne, Beth Wildermuth, Jamel Nicholas, Serinity Phillips, Christina Kaelin, Megan Barnicle, Tara Enzweiler, Angela Puente

BIG EAST Volleyball Preseason Honors

BIG EAST Preseason Player of the Year

Wioleta Leszczynska, St. John's, Gr., S

All-BIG EAST Preseason Team

Lecia Brown, Louisville, Jr., MB • Meagan Dooley, Pittsburgh, Jr., MH/OH • *Marcela Gurgel, USF, Jr., OH • Tatyana Kolesnikova, Louisville, Sr., OH • Wioleta Leszczynska, St. John's, Gr., S • Jana Matiasovska, Louisville, Sr., OH/MB • Tricia Meyers, Seton Hall, Sr., MB • Jessie Nevitt, Cincinnati, Sr., MB • Stephanie Niemer, Cincinnati, So., MB/OH • **Serinity Phillips, Notre Dame, Jr., OH** • **Justine Stremick, Notre Dame, Sr., MB** • Lena Yee, St. John's, Sr., L

* - unanimous selection



2008 Notre Dame Women's Volleyball Roster

No.	Name	Year	Pos.	Ht.	Hometown	High School / Club Team
2	Mallorie Croal	Sr.	OH	6-1	Villa Park, Calif.	Mater Dei / Golden West
3	Christina Kaelin	Jr.	OH	5-10	Louisville, Ky.	Assumption / KIVA
4	Serinity Phillips	Jr.	OH	5-11	Valley Center, Calif.	Valley Center / Vintage
5	Beth Wildermuth	Fr.	S	5-8	San Clemente, Calif.	Santa Margarita / Laguna Beach
6	Kim Kristoff	Jr.	MB	6-1	Carmel, Ind.	Brebeuf Jesuit / Team Indiana
7	Kellie Sciacca	So.	MB	6-1	Monument, Colo.	Lewis-Palmer / Colorado Juniors
8	Frenchy Silva	Fr.	L / DS	5-4	Laguna Niguel, Calif.	Dana Hills / Laguna Beach
9	Megan Fesl	Jr.	OH	6-1	Arlington Heights, Ill.	John Hersey / Sports Performance
10	Megan Barnicle	Fr.	MB	6-0	Winfield, Ill.	St. Francis / Sports Performance
11	Angela Puente	So.	L / DS	5-6	Redondo Beach, Calif.	Bishop Montgomery / South Bay
12	Jamel Nicholas	Jr.	S	5-7	Gibsonia, Pa.	Pine-Richland / Renaissance
13	Megan Dunne	So.	L / DS	5-4	Palos Heights, Ill.	Mother McAuley / Celtic Force
14	Justine Stremick	Sr.	MB	6-3	Langdon, N.D.	Langdon Area / Stars Athletics
15	Kristen Dealy	Fr.	OH	6-0	Santa Barbara, Calif.	Santa Barbara / Santa Barbara
16	Tara Enzweiler	Jr.	MB	5-10	Raleigh, N.C.	Cardinal Gibbons / Triangle
17	Stephanie Slatt	So.	OH	6-1	Burien, Wash.	John F. Kennedy / Puget Sound

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5	Beth Wildermuth	Fr.	S	5-8	San Clemente, Calif.	Santa Margarita / Laguna Beach

Head Coach: Debbie Brown (18th season / Arizona State '82)

Assistant Coaches: Greg Smith (3rd season / Westmont College '90), Matthew Botsford (1st season / Tri-State '98)

Volunteer Assistant Coach: Emily Loomis (1st season / Notre Dame '05)

Volleyball Operations Intern: Alisha Ewing (1st season / Bethel '05)

Athletic Trainer: Chantal Porter (Iowa State '94)

Senior Manager: Hy Pham (Notre Dame '09)

Pronunciation Guide

Megan Barnicle	.....BARN-eh-kul
Mallorie Croal	.....KROLE
Megan Dunne	.....DONE
Tara Enzweiler	.....ENZ-while-er
Megan Fesl	.....FEH-sul
Jamel Nicholas	.....juh-MEL
Christina Kaelin	.....KAY-lynn
Kim Kristoff	.....CHRIS-toff
Angela Puente	.....PWEN-tay
Kellie Sciacca	.....SHOCK-uh
Frenchy Silva	.....SILL-vuh
Serinity Phillips	.....suh-REN-ih-tee
Justine Stremick	.....STREM-ick
Beth Wildermuth	.....WILL-der-myooth





2 Mallorie Croal
Sr. • OH • 6-1
Villa Park, Calif.



3 Christina Kaelin
Jr. • OH • 5-10
Louisville, Ky.



4 Serinity Phillips
Jr. • OH • 5-11
Valley Center, Calif.



5 Beth Wildermuth
Fr. • S • 5-8
San Clemente, Calif.



6 Kim Kristoff
Jr. • MB • 6-1
Carmel, Ind.



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Jr. • MB • 5-10
Raleigh, N.C.



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So. • OH • 6-1
Burien, Wash.

