

NOTRE DAME FENCING – NCAA DAY ONE NOTES

Thursday, March 16, 2005 ... Houston, Texas (JW Marriott)

Notre Dame's quest to win its second straight NCAA combined fencing championship (and third in the past four years) begins today at the JW Marriott, in Houston, Texas. The NCAAs once again will adhere to the familiar four-day format, with the women's bouts slated for Thursday and Friday (March 16-17) while the men will fence on the weekend.

Notre Dame joined longtime rival Penn State and emerging power Harvard as the only teams that qualified the maximum 12 fencers (two per weapon) for the 2006 NCAAs while Columbia and St. John's each qualified 11 (Ohio State, the 2004 champion and '05 runner-up, qualified nine) ... recent history has shown that an 11-fencer squad can contend for the NCAA title, including the '03 NCAAs that saw Notre Dame's 12-fencer squad edge an 11-fencer Penn State unit by just three total bouts (182-179) while ND's 2005 team became the first ever to win the NCAA title without the full allotment of competitors (the 11-fencer Irish squad rallied to beat OSU, 173-171, followed by SJU, PSU, Columbia and Harvard) ... SJU was the only team at the '05 NCAAs with 12 fencers ... ND was runner-up to PSU every year from 1996-2000 before finishing third in '01 and '02 (plus '04), with the '03 championship representing ND's first national title since 1994 ... Ohio State also qualified 12 fencers in 2003 but finished fourth, behind ND, PSU and St. John's (which had just 10 fencers at the '03 NCAAs) ... the '04 NCAAs saw Ohio State win the title, followed by PSU and ND ... the 2001-04 NCAAs featured four different champions (SJU in '01, PSU in '02, ND in '03, OSU in '04).

The Notre Dame women own a combined record of 69-55 vs. their Thursday opponents (in recent college bouts and NCAA meetings). The Irish will face fellow 12-fencer qualifier Harvard in all three weapons on day-1 while also facing Penn State in foil. Other key matchups on tap for Thursday include bouts vs. Northwestern and SJU in foil, vs. Wayne State and OSU in epee, and vs. SJU and Columbia in sabre (details below).

The 144-fencer field includes 24 men's and 24 women's fencers at each of three weapons (foil, epee, sabre) ... fencers will compete against the other 23 competitors in their respective weapons, with teams earning one point for each round-robin victory posted by a fencer from that team ... the top four round-robin finishers in each weapon then will fence for the respective individual titles at the end of Friday (women) and Sunday's (men's) round-robin competition (those results do not factor into the team scores) ... the top 12 finishers in each weapon receive All-America honors.

Some notes on the Thursday matchups follow below ... check back to und.com throughout the NCAAs for complete coverage of ND's quest for its eighth NCAA team title, including a look at the ND program's history of fencers from Texas and a list of fencing alums currently living in the lone star state (many of whom will be in attendance at the '06 NCAAs).

SPORTS HOTLINE UPDATES – The Notre Dame sports hotline will provide regular on-site updates from all four days of the NCAAs, with the hotline to be updated several times each day (typically at the top of each hour, after bouting begins) ... to access the hotline, call (574) 631-3000, then select option "8" (for tennis and fencing) followed by option "3" for fencing updates.

THURSDAY'S NCAA FENCING SCHEDULE (DAY 1) – The women will fence the first 14 (rounds 1-4) of their 23 round-robin bouts on Thursday, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Note that space limitations have resulted in the three weapons not being contested at the same time, as the epee and foil will take place in the late morning and early afternoon while the sabre bouts will be in the late afternoon.

THE SCHEDULE (at the JW Marriott in Houston)

Thursday, March 16

10:00 a.m. – women's foil and women's epee (round 1)
11:30 a.m. – women's foil and women's epee (rounds 2-4)
3:00 p.m. – women's sabre (round 1)
4:00 p.m. – women's sabre (rounds 2-4)

Friday, March 17

9:00 a.m. – women's foil and women's epee (rounds 5-7)
12:15 p.m. – tournament ceremony
12:45 p.m. – women's foil and women's epee semifinals, final and third-place bout; women's sabre (rounds 5-7)
3:30 p.m. – women's sabre semifinals, final and third-place bout
4:30 p.m. – women's individual awards presentation

Saturday, March 18

10 a.m. – men's foil and men's epee (round 1)
11:30 a.m. – men's foil and men's epee (rounds 2-4)
3:00 p.m. – men's sabre (round 1)
4:00 p.m. – men's sabre (rounds 2-4)

Sunday, March 19

9:00 a.m. – men's foil and men's epee (rounds 5-7)
Noon – men's sabre (rounds 5-7); men's foil and men's epee semifinals, final and third-place bout
2:45 p.m. – men's sabre semifinals, final and third-place bout
3:30 p.m. – men's individual and team awards presentations

WOMEN'S EPEE (jr. Amy Orlando and fr. Madeleine Stephan, paired with Northwestern's Sharon Sullivan)

Round 1 – vs. teammate and NU's Sullivan, plus Wayne State's Anna Garina and Justyna Konczalska and OSU's Kaela Brendler

Round 2 – vs. Harvard's Jasmine McGlade and Maria Larsson and Cornell's Meghan Phair

Round 3 – vs. Penn's Holly Buechel, Air Force's Eliza Enyart and UCSD's Chelsea Ambort

Round 4 – vs. Duke's Anne Kericsmar and Dorothy Hubbard and Temple's Brianna Ferrara

Highlight Bouts – Orlando and Stephan's first 14 bouts include five fencers who previously have reached the NCAA semifinals (in 2004 and/or '05) ... the opening round includes big tests vs. WSU's Garina (the '04 and '05 NCAA champ) and another two-time All-American in OSU's Brendler (7th at '04 NAAs. 5th in '05) ... Penn's Buechel finished atop the 2005 NCAA round-robin standings but lost to ND's Orlando in the semifinals (she placed 4th) ... Duke's Kericsmar was the 3rd-place finisher in 2004 but dropped to 16th in '04 ... Cornell's Phair was a 2004 NCAA semifinalist but failed to return to the NAAs in '05 ... NU's Sullivan likewise competed in the '04 NAAs but missed qualifying in '05 (she also was paired with ND's Orlando at the '04 NAAs) ... Harvard's McGlade posted an All-American finish at the '05 NAAs (7th; also 13th in '04) ... WSU's Konczalska won the '06 NCAA Midwest Regional, with Harvard's Larsson also winning the Northeast Regional (McGlade was 2nd).

Recent Series Head-to-Head Notes for Orlando and Stephan vs. Thursday's Epee Opponents (28-22):

Harvard (1-1) – Orlando split a pair of 5-2 bouts vs. McGlade at the 2004 (win) and '05 (loss) NAAs.

Ohio State (7-7) – Orlando is 5-6 in college bouts vs. Brendler, including a 3-2 mark in her sophomore season (1-4 at NYU Duals, 4-3 at ND Duals, 5-3 in MFC team bout, 5-3 at Regional, 1-5 at NAAs) ... their meetings this season include a 5-4 win for Brendler at the ND Duals and Orlando's 5-4 win in the MFC team title matchup ... Brendler won most of the bouts vs. Orlando in 2004 (3-4 at ND Duals, 5-1 for Orlando in MFC team bout, 3-5 at Regional and 4-5 in NAAs) ... Stephan beat Brendler at the '06 ND Duals (5-4), lost in the MFC team meeting but beat her again in the Regional quarterfinal (15-10).

Wayne State (4-8) – Orlando traditionally has defeated Garina in 5-touch bouts, winning at the 2006 ND Duals (5-4), the '05 ND Duals (5-4) and in the 2004 (5-2) and '05 (5-2) NCAA round-robin, but Garina typically has prevailed in the 15-touch format, including a 15-14 win in the '06 Midwest Regional quarterfinals, a 14-11 bout in the '04 Midwest Fencing Conference title bout and a 15-6 win to claim the '05 NCAA title (plus 5-1 at '04 ND Duals, 5-1 at '04 Regional, 5-3 in '05 MFC team bout and 4-0 at '05 Regional) ... Orlando – who is 4-7 vs. Garina – lost to the newcomer Konczalska at the '06 ND Duals (4-5), as did Stephan (she also lost to Garina at that event, 2-5) ... Stephan also lost to Garina in the MFC semifinals (11-15) and dropped a 15-10 bout to Konczalska in the Regional semifinals.

Penn (2-1) – Orlando has split bouts vs. Buechel in the NCAA round-robin (1-5 in '04, 5-4 in '05) while also winning in the 2005 NCAA semifinal (15-5).

Duke (6-1) – Orlando has yet to lose to Kericsmar in college bouts with ND, winning at the '04 ND Duals (5-4), the '04 NAAs (5-3), the '05 NAAs (5-2, key final bout that helped Irish win title) and at the '06 ND Duals (5-1) ... Kericsmar beat Stephan in their '06 bout at the ND Duals (1-5) ... the ND duo swept Hubbard at the '06 ND Duals (Orlando 5-3, Stephan 5-4).

Northwestern (4-1) – Orlando and Sullivan are club teammates at the Northwest (Ore.) Fencing Center and have plenty of familiarity with one another ... their most recent bouts include Orlando's 5-4 win at the '04 NAAs and a 3-2 win for Sullivan at the '06 ND Duals ... Stephan has gone 3-0 vs. Sullivan this season (5-1 at Northwestern Duals, 4-3 at ND Duals, 15-11 in Regional third-place bout).

Cornell (0-1) – Phair beat Orlando in the 2004 NCAA round-robin (3-5).

Air Force (1-1) – Orlando beat Enyart at the '05 NAAs (5-4) but lost to her at the '06 ND Duals (3-4).

UC San Diego (3-1) – Orlando beat Ambort at the '05 NAAs (5-1) but lost to her at the '06 ND Duals (3-5) ... Stephan beat Ambort at both the ND Duals (5-4) and the UCSD Duals (5-4).

Note: Orlando and Stephan have yet to face Larsson or Ferrara in college bouts with ND (Stephan also has not fenced Enyart).

A Look Ahead At Friday's Epee Bouts:

Round 5 – vs. Columbia's Morgan Midgley and Rachel Rowe of Columbia and Brown's Ruth Schneider

Round 6 – vs. Penn State's Case Szarwark and Katarzyna Trzopek and Princeton's Erin McGarry

Round 7 – vs. Joanna Guy and Reka Szele of St. John's and NYU's Jean Goto

WOMEN'S FOIL (sophomore Melanie Bautista and freshman Adi Nott, paired with UCSD's Jen Chun)

Round 1 – vs. teammate, Chun, Harvard's Emily Cross and Chloe Stinetorf and Fullerton's Senta Breden

Round 2 – vs. Northwestern's Jessica Florendo and Sam Nemecek and Wayne State's Lindsay Howard

Round 3 – vs. Penn State's Tamara Najm and Anna Donath of Penn State and Duke's Marilyn Tycker

Round 4 – vs. Katia Larchanka and Erzsebet Garay of St. John's and Penn's Abigail Emerson

Highlight Bouts: vs. Harvard's Cross (the '05 NCAA champ) and four-time NCAA competitor Stinetorf (All-American with 12th-place finish in '03, 11th in '04; also 17th in '05), the Northwestern duo of Florendo (12th at '05 NAAs) and Nemecek (top-ranked newcomer), PSU's four-time NCAA entrant Donath (6th in '03, 7th in '04, 14th in '05) and the SJU pair of Garay (12th in '04, 4th in '05) and Larchanka (13th in '05) ... Breden has competed in multiple NAAs, including an 18th-place finish in '05.

Bautista and Nott's Recent Head-to-Head Series vs. Thursday's Foil Opponents (11-19):

St. John's (1-3) – Nott beat Garay at the NYU Duals (5-3) but lost to Larchanka (1-5) while Bautista dropped 2-5 and 3-5 bouts to those fencers, respectively.

Northwestern (6-10) – the fierce ND-Northwestern battles in women's foil this year saw Bautista beat Florendo at the Northwestern Duals (5-4), with both ND fencers also beating Nemecek at that event (Nott 5-2 and Bautista 3-2, with Nott losing a 3-5 bout to Florendo) ... the rematch at the ND Duals then featured Nott's 5-2 win over Florendo (who edged Bautista, 5-4) but Nemecek beat both (1-5 vs. Bautista, 4-5 vs. Nott) ... Nemecek also topped Nott in the MFC semifinals (15-3) and beat both of the eventual NCAA entrants in the MFC team title bout (Nemecek also beat Bautista in that matchup but lost to Nott, 3-2) ... most recently, Nemecek beat Bautista in the Regional quarterfinals (15-6) and Nott beat Florendo in the semifinals (15-13) before losing the title bout to Nemecek (7-15) ... Nott is 2-2 vs. Florendo in college bouts this season and 2-3 vs. Nemecek ... Bautista's recent bouts include a 1-2 mark vs. Florendo and 1-3 vs. Nemecek.

Wayne State (0-2) – Bautista and Nott both dropped 3-5 bouts to Howard at the ND Duals.

Duke (1-1) – Bautista (4-5) and Nott (5-1) split bouts vs. Tycker at the ND Duals.

UCSD (2-1) – Nott beat Chun at the Northwestern Duals (5-1) while Bautista lost (3-4) before winning the rematch at the UCSD Duals (5-2).

Fullerton (1-2) – Nott beat Breden at the Northwestern Duals (5-2) while Bautista lost to the NCAA veteran at that event (4-5) and at the UCSD Duals (2-5).

Note: Bautista and Nott have not fenced recent college bouts vs. Cross, Stinetorf, Najm, Donath or Emerson.

Looking Ahead to Friday's Foil Bouts

Round 5 – vs. Columbia's Kelsey Finkel and Kathleen Reckling of Columbia and Christine Lee of Tufts

Round 6 – vs. Princeton's Jacqueline Leahy and Sara Jew-Lim of Princeton and Penn's Ilana Sinkin

Round 7 – vs. Temple's Nina Gernes and Jenna Remmert and NYU's Kristen Wentrcek

WOMEN'S SABRE (jr. Valerie Providenza and soph. Mariel Zagunis, paired with UCSD's Raelyn Jacobson)

Round 1 – vs. teammate, UCSD's Jacobson, Duke's Ibtihaj Muhammad and Allison Schafer, Lauren Phillips of Rutgers

Round 2 – vs. Olga Ovtchinnikova and Kasia Wieronski of St. John's and Penn's Cassandra Partyka

Round 3 – vs. Columbia's Emma Barratta and Emily Jacobson and Yale's Carly Guss

Round 4 – vs. Harvard's Carolyn Wright and Alexa Weingarten and Cornell's Alexandra Heiss

Highlights Bouts: vs. Duke's Muhammad (11th at '05 NAAs), the SJU duo of Ovtchinnikova and Wieronski (12th in '05), the tough pair from Columbia of three-time All-American Barratta (5th in '03, 4th in '04, 8th in '05) and the '05 NCAA champion Jacobson (a USA national teammate/2004 Olympic teammate of Zagunis), and two others from contending teams in Harvard's Wright (6th in '05) and Weingarten (14th in '05).

Series Head-to-Head Notes for Providenza and Zagunis vs. Thursday's Sabre Opponents (30-14):

Harvard (4-0) – The ND fencers swept the Crimson at the '05 NAAs, with Weingarten losing 5-4 to Providenza and 5-2 to Zagunis while Wright dropped a 5-3 bout to Providenza and a 5-4 decision to Zagunis.

Columbia (7-8) – This blockbuster rivalry includes four wins by Jacobson over Zagunis (5-3 at the '05 NYU Duals, 5-1 in the '05 NCAA round-robin, 15-11 in the '05 NCAA final and 5-3 at the '06 NYU Duals) but Zagunis has won all three of her college bouts vs. Barratta (5-0 at '05 NYU Duals, 5-1 at '05 NAAs, 5-3 at '06 NYU Duals) ... Providenza lost to Jacobson at the '05 NYU Duals (2-5) but won the NCAA rematch (5-3), with Jacobson then winning at the '06 NYU Duals (1-5) ... Providenza owns a 3-2 record vs. Barratta in college bouts: 2-5 at '04 NYU Duals, 2-5 in '04 NAAs, 5-4 at '05 NYU Duals, 5-2 at '05 NAAs and 5-3 at '06 NYU Duals.

St. John's (6-0) – ND holds the clear series edge, with Providenza beating Wieronski three times (5-2 at '04 NYU Duals, 5-2 at '05 NAAs, 5-1 at '06 NYU Duals) while also posting a 5-4 win at NYU this season over Ovtchinnikova ... Zagunis beat Wieronski at the '05 NAAs (5-4) before posting wins at the '06 NYU Duals over Ovtchinnikova (5-4) and Wieronski (5-1).

Duke (7-4) – Muhammad has posted a 3-1 record in record bouts vs. Providenza, winning 2-5 at the '04 NAAs, 4-5 at the '05 Duke Duals and 3-5 at the '06 ND Duals (Providenza won their '05 NCAA bout, 5-2) ... Providenza beat Schafer at the '05 Duke Duals (5-3) and then in the NAAs (5-2) but lost to her at the '06 ND Duals (4-5) ... Zagunis shut out both of the Duke fencers at the '05 NAAs (5-0), adding a 5-2 win over Muhammad and a 5-1 bout with Schaffer at the '06 ND Duals.

Yale (3-2) – Zagunis beat Guss at the '05 NAAs (5-3) and the '06 NYU Duals (5-1) ... Providenza won her first college bout vs. Guss (5-3, at '04 NYU Duals) but lost to her at the '05 NAAs (0-5) and the '06 NYU Duals (3-5).

UCSD (3-0) – The ND fencers swept Jacobson at the Northwestern Duals (Providenza 5-3, Zagunis 5-2), with Providenza adding a 5-0 win at the UCSD Duals.

Note: Providenza and Zagunis have not fencer Phillips, Partyka or Heiss in college bouts with the Irish.

Looking Ahead to Friday's Sabre Bouts

Round 5 – vs. Ohio State's Siobhan Byrne and Eileen Grench and Stanford's Eva Jellison

Round 6 – vs. Penn State's Caitlin Thompson and Sophia Hiss and North Carolina's Jennifer Kling

Round 7 – vs. Northwestern's Mai Van Vu and Emily Pasternak of Northwestern and Wayne State's Katarzyna Kuzniak