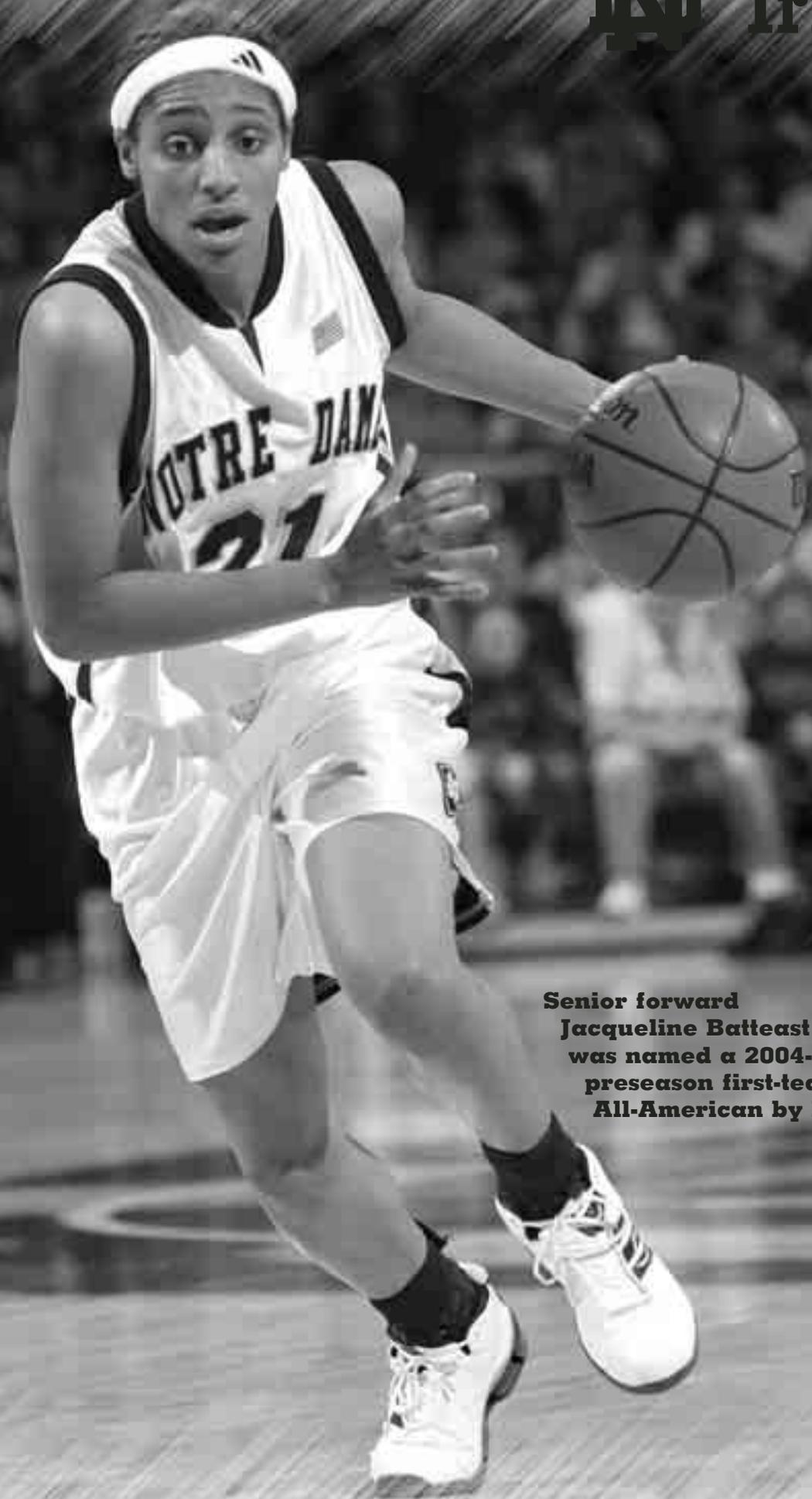




Irish

Outlook



**Senior forward
Jacqueline Batteast
was named a 2004-05
preseason first-team
All-American by Lindy's.**

JUST ANOTHER CASE OF HISTORY REPEATING?

Experience, leadership and depth give Notre Dame all the tools for a return to the Final Four.

In many areas of society, the ability to spot the trends is paramount. For those in economic circles, having the foresight to note when the stock market may rise or fall can result in fortunes being won or lost several times over. The same can be said for those in the fashion world, where a particular style can vault a designer to new heights and put that person's name on the lips of celebrities worldwide.

However, with all due respect to the folks on Wall Street and Rodeo Drive, followers of the Notre Dame women's basketball team would argue that the most important trend has been the regularity with which the Irish have made a name for themselves on the college basketball scene.

The cycle began in the 1996-97 season, when Notre Dame opened with a third-place finish in the Preseason Women's National Invitation Tournament (WNIT) and parlayed that showing into a 31-7 record and the program's first-ever NCAA Final Four berth. That year, the Irish were led by a pair of All-America selections in **Beth Morgan** and **Katryna Gaither**, who proved to be the cornerstones of Notre Dame's success. Among their more impressive achievements that year was a landmark win at No. 14 Texas in round two of the NCAA Tournament, a foreshadowing of things to come in future seasons.

Upon Morgan and Gaither's graduation after the 1997 Final Four, the Irish were expected to come back to Earth as their roster was filled with players who had little or no postseason experience. Instead, Notre Dame maintained and expanded on its newfound level of excellence, stunning sixth-ranked Texas Tech on its home floor in the second round of the 1998 NCAA Tournament and adding another visit to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen in 2000. The latter season ended on a sour note, however, as the Irish dropped a difficult four-point decision to that same Texas Tech club they had defeated two years earlier.

Nevertheless, the foundation had been laid for a memorable 2000-01 campaign. Once again, Notre Dame was overflowing with talent, boasting a starting lineup that included All-Americans **Ruth Riley** and **Niele Ivey**, not to mention the '01 BIG EAST Conference Most Improved Player in **Kelley Siemon** and a rising sharpshooter/future All-American in **Alicia Ratay**. The result was magical, as the Irish finished 34-2 and won the program's first national championship, claiming the NCAA title game over Purdue in dramatic fashion on Riley's two free throws with 5.8 seconds to play.

With a championship in the books and a banner in the Joyce Center rafters, Notre Dame again was faced with the prospect of starting



Junior guard Megan Duffy has kept defenses honest with her perimeter shooting, connecting at a 40-percent clip from the three-point line last season.

from scratch. In fact, when the Irish took the floor in their first NCAA Tournament game the following season, only five of the 12 players on the roster had taken part in a postseason contest. Still, Notre Dame advanced to the second round of the NCAA tourney in 2002, and a year later, the newest Irish incarnation used the postseason knowledge it had gained to get back to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen, registering a blockbuster second-round win at No. 8 Kansas State along the way.

Last season, Notre Dame made its second consecutive Sweet Sixteen appearance (and sixth in the past eight years) and seemed poised to climb the next rung on the postseason ladder, owning a five-point lead over No. 5 Penn State midway through the second half. However, the basketball gods were not prepared to honor the Irish bid for advancement, as PSU rallied to score the final six points and take the hard-fought 55-49 victory.

Now, the 2004-05 season dawns and with it come numerous similarities to past years. For one, Notre Dame has a veteran roster that has been forged through the fires of postseason play. Heading into this season, eight of the 11 players on the squad have played in at least three NCAA Tournament games, with five of them having a full half-dozen postseason contests under their belts. What's more, the Irish have a bushel of talent to call upon, led by senior All-America forward **Jacqueline Batteast**, the 2004 BIG EAST Most Improved Player in

junior guard **Megan Duffy** and a 2003 freshman All-America selection in junior forward **Courtney LaVere**.

At the same time, one must remember the caveat that is read at the end of many late-night investment infomercials — "past performance is not always indicative of future results." Veteran Notre Dame head coach **Muffet McGraw** would tend to agree with that disclaimer.

"The road to the Final Four can be filled with a lot of potholes," she notes. "You have to be a little bit lucky in terms of staying injury-free, you have to consistently stay out of foul trouble and you have to get into the right bracket when the tournament starts."

"On the other hand, it absolutely would be great for us to win a national championship every four years," she continues. "You certainly have to rely on your senior leadership and this is the senior class that we thought would be great for us. We do have high expectations for them, and we expect them to go out with the best finish of their careers. That's why we think this should be a great year for us."

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To find the experience and leadership she seeks, McGraw needs look no further than her front line. Notre Dame will field one of the most seasoned post games in the country in 2004-05, with her three probable starters accounting for a combined 171 starting assignments in their respective careers. That's a figure only one other team that advanced to last year's NCAA Sweet Sixteen can match (Texas - 197).





Senior center Teresa Borton has been a mainstay in the post for the Irish, playing in all 94 games since her arrival at Notre Dame three years ago.

Furthermore, the Irish are particularly deep in the post, having retained four of their five forwards/centers from last year. In fact, Notre Dame added even more muscle to its front line during the off-season with the addition of 6-5 freshman post **Melissa D'Amico**. The potent combination of size and experience has been one of the main reasons the Irish continue to be one of the nation's top defensive teams, ranking among the top 50 in the nation in field-goal percentage defense and blocked shots each of the last five years, while ranking 39th in scoring defense last season (58.5 ppg.). In fact, Notre Dame has held its opponents to an average of fewer than 60 points per game in three of the past four years, including a school-record streak of seven straight games allowing 52 points or fewer last season.

However, McGraw points out that if Notre Dame expects to contend this year, it has to beef up an offense that has averaged fewer than 66 points per game the past three seasons, including 64.2 ppg. last year (its lowest output since averaging 60.0 ppg. in 1980-81).

"We got a lot of confidence last year, but the thing we really need to improve on is our scoring," she says. "Defensively, we were really strong last year and we did a lot of great things. Now we have to get our offensive production back up to where it should be, and that's something we want to focus on this year."

Without question, the focal point of the Irish offense will be **Batteast**. A returning All-America selection and National Player of the Year candidate in 2004-05, she is coming off her best season in a Notre Dame uniform, averaging career bests of 16.0 points and 8.6 rebounds per game. **Batteast** was a first-team all-BIG EAST pick last year and was sensational in the NCAA Tournament, registering three consecutive double-doubles while logging 22.0 points and 11.7 rebounds with a .483 field-goal percentage in Notre Dame's run to the Sweet Sixteen. In addition, she was lethal against top-25 opponents last season, carding 16.3 points, 9.0 rebounds and 1.5 blocks per game with five double-doubles and three near double-doubles.

Entering her final season at Notre Dame, **Batteast** ranks 11th on the school's all-time scoring list with 1,315 points, and stands in the Top 10 on 10 other Irish career statistical charts, including rebounds (7th — 747), blocks (tie-5th — 124) and scoring average (4th — 14.6 ppg.). She also has scored in double figures 72 times in her 90-game career and has 32 double-doubles to her credit. However, her biggest asset has been her toughness — the South Bend native has started 64 consecutive games and has missed only four games in her three-year tenure (all due to a knee injury suffered late in her freshman campaign).

"Jackie is one of the best players in the country and without question, she ranks in the top 10 on that list," McGraw says. "She can really determine the outcome of a game and she can just take over at any time. We saw that last year on several occasions, including in the Connecticut game, when she was just unstoppable, and all throughout the NCAA Tournament. We have total confidence in her and believe she is poised to have a tremendous senior season."

LaVere is expected to hold down the other forward position. A freshman All-America choice in 2002-03 when she averaged 12.4 points and 5.6 rebounds per game, **LaVere** saw her numbers dip slightly in her second season with the Irish, finishing at 8.6 points and 4.5 rebounds per night. Still, the Ventura, Calif., resident was a key force at both ends of the floor last year, leading the team and ranking fifth in the BIG EAST in blocked shots (1.28 bpg.), while scoring in double figures 13 times. She also came up with a critical double-double in Notre Dame's first-round NCAA Tournament win over Southwest Missouri State, piling up 11 points and a career-high 13 rebounds while chipping in a pair of important overtime baskets to help the Irish defeat the Lady Bears.

For her career, **LaVere** is averaging 10.5 points and 5.1 rebounds per game. She has scored in double digits 34 times in 64 games, while collecting six double-doubles, and like **Batteast**, she has been particularly reliable, not missing a game in her first two seasons. McGraw points out that **LaVere** was her own biggest critic last season and aims to return to the form she displayed as a rookie two years ago.

"Courtney is ready to get going again," the Irish head coach says. "She wasn't as happy with her sophomore year as she was with her freshman year. Since then, she has made a huge jump in terms of what she has to do mentally, and she's worked really hard on her game during the off-season. She's come out with renewed enthusiasm and her work ethic has been very good. We feel she can be a go-to player for us because she wants the ball in pressure situations, and she can make a big play for the team at both ends."

Senior center **Teresa Borton** has been a steady presence in the middle for Notre Dame during the past three seasons. Despite several nagging injuries that have hampered her production at times, **Borton** has steadfastly refused to miss a practice or game, appearing in all 94 Irish games since her arrival and making 58 starts. Last year, her progress was delayed by off-season heel surgery and she wound up averaging 5.8 points and 4.0 rebounds per game.

Nevertheless, the Yakima, Wash., product has shown flashes of potential on both offense and defense throughout her career. She has scored in double figures 24 times and ranks seventh in school history for both career field-goal percentage (.536) and career blocks (93). McGraw hopes **Borton's** determination and positive outlook will be rewarded with a breakout senior season.

"I have so much respect for **Teresa** because she has played through so much adversity," McGraw says. "She hasn't been 100 percent healthy in her entire career here and yet she refuses to sit out. She's going to fight through the pain to help the team and won't let herself fail. She has gained the respect of her teammates because she'll do whatever it takes. We really want her to be a little more of an offensive threat and she's willing to do that for us. She's a great leader for this team and has such a great attitude."

Supporting the starting front line is sophomore **Crystal Erwin**, who offers an element of extreme physicality that has McGraw smiling and opponents feeling uneasy. Displaying a mix of raw talent and boundless energy, **Erwin** often sent a buzz through the Joyce Center crowd every time she stepped on the court. She played in every game as a





freshman for the Irish, logging 3.3 points and 2.1 rebounds per game with a respectable .447 field goal percentage. Now, after a year in the system, McGraw feels Erwin can make a significant contribution in 2004-05.

"Crystal does so many things that we need and that's why we want her to take on a bigger role this year," McGraw says. "She improved by leaps and bounds last year and she's somebody who should be an impact player for us this season. She changes the look of our team just by entering the game, and with that new look, people now see us as a more physical basketball team."

With the wealth of veterans returning in the post for Notre Dame this season, D'Amico will be able to develop gradually in her rookie campaign while getting adjusted to the college game. As one of the top players coming out of Long Island this past year, she averaged 20.7 points per game as a senior and earned fifth-team all-state honors. Her size alone will make her a valuable asset for the Irish and someone who will be counted on for greater things in the years to come.

"Melissa will definitely help us in the post, but with our experience there, she'll be able to go along at her own pace," McGraw says. "We hope she's someone who can score on the block and create a defensive presence simply based on her height."

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A lot of coaches might be worried if they were faced with the prospect of losing more than half of their guards from last year's club, including three players with national championship experience. That's the predicament McGraw faces with her Irish backcourt this season and yet, the Notre Dame skipper addresses the situation with a wide grin and overflowing optimism.

The primary source of McGraw's confidence is the constant, calming presence of Duffy at the point guard position. After cracking the starting lineup late in her freshman season, Duffy made tremendous strides last year, arguably showing more improvement than any other point guard in the country. She was able to triple her scoring average to 9.9 points per game, while doubling her assist (3.9 apg.) and field goal percentage (.404) totals and leading the team in both categories. Her familiarity with the Irish offense also was evident in her sharp 1.36 assist-to-turnover ratio, a figure that ranked seventh in the conference a year ago.

An honorable mention all-BIG EAST selection last season, Duffy assumed a leadership role from the outset, commanding respect from her teammates and coaches for her unbreakable will and discipline. On the court, she has displayed amazing court awareness and creativity, all while maintaining intense

focus away from the hardwood (she earned Dean's List honors in the spring 2004 semester with a 3.786 grade-point average). So it's easy to see why McGraw has faith that her backcourt will be strong this season.

"I don't know if there's anybody who works on her game the way Megan does, because she does things the right way," McGraw says. "She sets goals for herself every time she's on the floor, works extremely hard to meet those goals, and looks to get the freshmen to go out and match her intensity. She's going to be a great leader because everybody knows she has the best interests of the team at heart. She's one of the best in the country at knowing and understanding the game, and while it's might be a cliché, she's really a coach on the floor for us."

A pair of sophomores will be the other returning veterans in the Notre Dame guard rotation. **Breona Gray** appeared in 29 games as a rookie last year, averaging 2.2 points and 1.6 rebounds per game while playing primarily in a defensive role. A scrappy, aggressive force, she is expected to fill a similar role for the Irish this season, although her speed and insatiable desire to improve will make her a threat in the team's transition offense as well.

Conversely, **Susie Powers** was brought along gradually as a freshman, playing in 21 games for Notre Dame. A perimeter scoring threat, she will be called upon to shoulder some of the outside scoring load for the Irish in the wake of departed senior sharpshooter Jeneka Joyce. Powers is a superb ball handler and passer who should see regular minutes for the Irish this season.

"Breona contributed quite a bit for us as a freshman and had some really big games for us," McGraw notes. "She's going to play a pivotal role for us again this year as a defensive stopper. We feel comfortable putting her on the other team's best player because she's a great defender and works so hard."

"At the same time, Susie really needs to step up and be our best three-point shooter," McGraw continues. "We want her to be the same kind of contributor that Jeneka was last year, coming off the bench and giving us a spark from the outside. Her size (5-10) also makes her a good asset at both ends, and we're looking for her to step up her game defensively this season."

Joining the Notre Dame backcourt will be two freshmen who bring impressive pedigrees with them. **Charel Allen** graduated from Monessen (Pa.) High School earlier this year as one of the leading scorers in Pennsylvania history, finishing fifth all-time with 3,110 points. Her prep statistical

averages (26.1 ppg., 10.5 rpg., 5.0 apg., 6.4 spg., .351 three-point percentage) quickly raised eyebrows nationwide, but the four-time honorable mention All-America choice earned McGraw's admiration for the unselfish manner in which she carried herself. In fact, Allen sacrificed a good deal of personal offensive production as a senior (her scoring average dropped by nearly four points per game) in order to help Monessen win its first Class A state championship and just the second ever by a western Pennsylvania school.

"Charel does so many things well, but one of her most impressive qualities is the way she makes those around her better," McGraw says. "She has a true scorer's mentality, which is something we certainly need this year. We are looking for someone who wants to shoot the ball, and she will be able to do that for us. She can also run the floor well and should fit into the college game very well."

While Allen offers a proven scoring threat, point guard **Tulyah Gaines** brings speed — and lots of it. From the moment Gaines signed with the Irish last fall, McGraw maintained that the North Las Vegas, Nev., resident would be one of the fastest players in the history of the program. In some ways, she resembles recently-graduated Notre Dame guard LeTania Severe, giving the Irish quickness in transition, excellent defense and an extremely capable understudy for Duffy.



Junior forward Courtney LaVere was a defensive force for Notre Dame last season, ranking fifth in the BIG EAST with 1.28 blocked shots per game.





Tenacious sophomore guard Breona Gray will be looked upon to take the role of defensive stopper for the Irish this season.

Gaines averaged 20.5 points, 4.0 assists, 3.8 steals and 3.6 rebounds per game in her lone season at Cheyenne High School, picking up first-team all-conference honors along the way. She also was named an honorable mention all-state selection and capped her senior campaign by being named the Gatorade Player of the Year in Nevada. A two-time honorable mention prep All-American, Gaines spent her first three seasons at Burroughs High School in Burbank, Calif., setting that school's single-season record for assists (122 in 2003).

"Tulyah is an outstanding defender and will help us to not feel the loss of Le'Tania quite as much," McGraw says. "Tulyah is going to create havoc for the other teams' point guards because she's such a great on-ball defender. It's going to be hard for other teams to keep up with her on the break because she can really push the ball up the floor. She also handles the ball well and has great court vision."

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Part of the reason for Notre Dame's success has been its traditionally-difficult schedule. This year's incarnation of the Irish has cut its teeth against no less than 28 ranked opponents during the past three seasons, with the number of conference and non-conference games split evenly. Notre Dame also has the benefit of playing in one of the country's toughest conferences, the BIG EAST, which has produced the last five national champions and tied an NCAA record by sending eight teams to the NCAA Tournament last year.

The Irish will tip off the 2004-05 season with their second-ever appearance in the Preseason WNIT, playing host to Illinois State in the opening round on Nov. 12. Aside from Notre Dame, eight other teams in this season's 16-team field competed in the postseason last year,

highlighted by NCAA Elite Eight qualifier Duke and NCAA second-round participant Ohio State. In addition, defending Pacific-10 Conference co-champion Arizona, Big 12 Conference member Nebraska and Western Athletic Conference contender Rice are slated to compete in the single-elimination event, which will be contested entirely at campus sites.

"We're looking at the Preseason WNIT as a great way to get us off on the right foot," McGraw says. "There are so many good teams in this year's tournament that we are going to have to be ready right from the opening tip."

The ledger doesn't get any easier for Notre Dame following the Preseason WNIT. The Irish will welcome Big Ten powers Michigan State (Dec. 2) and Purdue (Jan. 16) to the Joyce Center for nationally-televised games, with the latter comprising half of the BIG EAST/Big Ten Challenge (Rutgers at Ohio State is the other half). Notre Dame also will tangle with Pac-10 Conference members USC (Nov. 26) and Washington (Dec. 11), as well as future BIG EAST member Marquette (Dec. 19).

With Miami and Virginia Tech having left the BIG EAST, a 12-team league remains for this season, with each squad facing five opponents twice (home and away), three at home and three on the road. All 12 teams will qualify for the BIG EAST Championship, which is scheduled for March 5-8, 2005, at the Hartford Civic Center.

Notre Dame will have an imposing challenge before it in conference play, facing Boston College, Connecticut, Rutgers, Seton Hall and Syracuse twice this season. Of that quintet, Connecticut is the three-time defending national champion, BC has advanced to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen the past two seasons, Rutgers has qualified for the last two NCAA Tournaments and Seton Hall reached the

second round of the postseason WNIT a year ago. The Irish also will play host to Georgetown, St. John's and West Virginia at the Joyce Center, with WVU coming off its first NCAA Tournament berth in 12 years. In addition, Notre Dame will pay visits to Pittsburgh, Providence and Villanova this season, with VU having made the last two NCAA Tournaments and advancing to the Elite Eight in 2003.

"It's going to a great year for our conference," McGraw says. "We had nine teams get into the postseason last year, including eight in the NAAs, and the rest of the league is really on the rise. You look at teams like St. John's, Pittsburgh and Syracuse and they're definitely going to make some noise in the near future. This league is getting stronger every day and I really don't think the loss of Miami and Virginia Tech will cause the BIG EAST to suffer at all."

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When discussing the potential fortunes of this year's Notre Dame women's basketball team, one word has frequently popped up — confidence. Much like the program's four-year trend of success, the last three seasons have seen the Irish exhibit a frustrating pattern of early non-conference struggles, followed by a rebirth in conference play, a brief hiccup in the BIG EAST Championship, and then major growth in the NCAA Tournament. However, McGraw feels her team is ready to shed its preseason *modus operandi* and move in a new direction in 2004-05.

"Confidence has definitely been a problem for this team in the past," she notes. "Coming in following a national championship back in 2002 was much harder for them than we envisioned. But, since last January, when we beat teams like Connecticut and Boston College, we've started to figure out what we have to do. That shot of confidence will help us, but for this team to be really good this year, we have to play well early and perform better on the road."

"We don't have anyone left from our national championship team, so this is the time for our current players to put their own mark in the Notre Dame record books," she continues. "We have great veteran leadership with Jackie Batteast, Megan Duffy and Teresa Borton, all of whom have earned the respect of their teammates for their actions both on and off the floor. With those three setting the tone, this team is ready to step out of the shadows of Ruth Riley, Niele Ivey and Kelley Siemon, and make a name for themselves right now."



The Opening Tip

While the Associated Press and ESPN/USA Today preseason polls won't be released until late October, all indications are that Notre Dame will be a Top 25 club.

In fact, the Irish were a consensus top-15 selection in each of the preseason publications that came out in September. *SLAM* had Notre Dame at No. 10, followed by *Street & Smith's* (11th), *Lindy's College Basketball Annual* (14th) and *Athlon Sports* (15th).

Actually, none of this should come as a shock to faithful Notre Dame observers. The Irish have been ranked in the preseason Top 25 of both the Associated Press and ESPN/USA Today polls seven times in the past eight seasons (1996-97 through 2003-04). The only time in that span when Notre Dame was not ranked in the preseason was 1997-98, the season after its first trip to the NCAA Final Four.

The Irish achieved their highest preseason rankings in 2000-01, opening at No. 5 in the AP poll and No. 6 in the coaches' poll. Last year, Notre Dame debuted at No. 15 in the AP balloting and No. 16 in the ESPN/USA Today survey. The coaches' poll proved to be pretty accurate, as the Irish wound up finishing 20th in that ranking following their trip to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen.

Irish Put Streaks To Test In 2004-05

Notre Dame will enter this season with several streaks intact:

- 11 consecutive postseason berths — the second-longest current streak in the BIG EAST (Connecticut - 16).
- Nine consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances — also is the second-longest current streak in the BIG EAST behind Connecticut's 16 NCAA berths.

What's Back for the Irish in 2004-05

Starters	4
Monogram Winners	7
All-Americans	1
(Jacqueline Batteast)	
All-BIG EAST Selections	2
(Jacqueline Batteast, Megan Duffy)	
Points	71.8% (1,475 of 2,054)
Rebounds	76.0% (906 of 1,192)
Assists	61.9% (293 of 473)
Blocked Shots	90.3% (121 of 134)
Steals	65.3% (188 of 288)
Field Goals Made	74.3% (554 of 746)
Three-Point Field Goals Made	50.0% (61 of 122)
Free Throws Made	69.5% (306 of 440)



Senior All-America forward Jacqueline Batteast averaged 16.3 points and 9.0 rebounds with five double-doubles in 11 games against Top 25 opponents last season.

- 11 consecutive 20-win seasons — matches the longest current streak in the BIG EAST (Connecticut - 11); also one of six teams in the nation with an active run of that length.
- Nine consecutive first-round NCAA Tournament victories.
- 20 consecutive home victories — the eighth-longest active streak in the nation and second-longest run in school history.
- 51 consecutive home games with at least 5,000 fans in attendance.
- Eight consecutive Top 20 recruiting classes (1996-2003) as ranked by *Blue Star Index* — one of three teams in the country with a current streak of that length.

Notre Dame's All-Star Candidates

Senior forward **Jacqueline Batteast** enters the 2004-05 campaign with an impressive pedigree that makes her a legitimate candidate for All-America and National Player of the Year consideration.

Batteast is one of three returning first-team all-BIG EAST selections, joining Boston College's Jessalyn Deveny and Rutgers' Cappie Pondexter. Batteast is the top returning rebounder in the conference (8.6 rpg.) and third-leading scorer (16.0 ppg.) and shot blocker (1.19 bpg.) among BIG EAST returnees. In addition, she has the most double-doubles (13) of any returning player in the conference.

Two preseason publications already have placed Batteast in the upper echelon this season. *Lindy's College Basketball Annual* tabbed the South Bend native as a preseason first-team All-American, while *Street & Smith's* chose Batteast as one of the nation's top 10 players for 2004-05.

Junior guard **Megan Duffy** was the BIG EAST Most Improved Player last season and looks to build upon that award in 2004-05. An honorable mention all-conference pick, Duffy ranks third among returning BIG EAST point guards in both assists (3.91) and assist/turnover ratio (1.36), while also standing as the second-best returning free throw shooter (.819) in the loop.

Notre Dame has a handful of other players who also could merit all-star recognition. Junior forward **Courtney LaVere** was a freshman All-America choice and BIG EAST All-Rookie Team selection two years ago, and she is the second-leading returning shot blocker (1.28 bpg.) in the BIG EAST this year. Senior center **Teresa Borton** has ranked among the top shot blockers in the conference in each of her first three seasons, while sophomore forward **Crystal Erwin** was the preseason BIG EAST Co-Freshman of the Year last season. With continued improvement, both players could be on pace for all-league honors.

New Kids On The Block

Notre Dame has four newcomers in the fold this season. This group of freshmen have collectively been ranked as the No. 14 recruiting class in the country by *Blue Star Index*, marking the eighth consecutive year the Irish have welcomed a top-20 rookie corps.

Charel Allen, a 5-11 guard from Monessen (Pa.) High School, is known for her scoring punch, having ended her prep career ranked fifth on Pennsylvania's all-time scoring list with 3,110 points. In fact, she joins a short list of Keystone State products who scored 3,000 points in high school, including Kelly Mazzante and Michelle Marciniak.



However, Allen's skills aren't limited to her scoring ability. She logged 26.1 points, 10.5 rebounds, 5.0 assists and 6.4 steals per game during her illustrious prep career, twice being named the Associated Press Class A State Player of the Year. She also was a four-time honorable mention All-America selection by *Street & Smith's* and was ranked 27th in the nation by *Blue Star Index*.

Melissa D'Amico, a 6-5 forward/center from Manorville, N.Y., joins Ruth Riley and Majenica Rupe as the tallest players in Notre Dame women's basketball history. A graduate of William Floyd High School in Mastic Beach, N.Y., D'Amico led all Long Island seniors in scoring at 20.7 points per game, earning fifth-team all-state honors along the way. As a junior, she averaged 16.8 points, 9.1 rebounds and 3.5 blocks per game before attending the adidas Top Ten Camp where she was singled out for the *USA Today* "Stock on the Rise" list. She was ranked 47th in the country by *All-Star Girls Report* and 91st nationally by *Blue Star Index*.

While D'Amico will be the tallest Irish player this year, Tulyah Gaines, a 5-6 point guard from North Las Vegas, Nev., will be the team's shortest. The speedster from the desert turned in a balanced effort in her only season at Cheyenne High School, averaging 20.5 points, 4.0 assists, 3.8 steals and 3.6 rebounds per game, while earning first-team all-Sunset League recognition. She also was an honorable mention all-state choice by the *Las Vegas Sun* and ultimately was chosen as Nevada's Gatorade Player of the Year.

Prior to moving to Las Vegas, Gaines spent three seasons at Burroughs High School in Burbank, Calif., where she set averaged 18.9 points and 5.1 assists per game as a junior and set the school's single-season assist record (122). She also was a two-time honorable mention All-

America pick by *Street & Smith's*, as well as being a first-team all-region selection following her junior season. She was ranked in the top 65 nationally by three recruiting outlets — 25th by *All Game Sports*, 52nd by *Blue Star Index* and 61st by *All-Star Girls Report*.

More Milestones Ahead For McGraw

Notre Dame head coach **Muffet McGraw** has a chance to reach three impressive career milestones at some point during the 2004-05 season:

- With 384 wins in 17 years at Notre Dame, she needs 10 victories to pass **Digger Phelps** for the most wins ever by a Notre Dame basketball coach (male or female). Phelps collected 393 victories at the helm of the Irish men's team from 1971-91 and currently serves as a college basketball analyst for ESPN.
- She is 16 wins away from logging her 400th career victory at Notre Dame.
- Including her five seasons at Lehigh, McGraw has 472 career victories, putting her within striking distance of the magic 500-win club.

Irish Set To Open In Preseason WNIT

For the first time since 1996, and only the second time in school history, the Notre Dame women's basketball team will take part in the Preseason Women's National Invitation Tournament (WNIT). The Irish have been selected to play host to Illinois State on Friday, Nov. 12 at 9 p.m. (EST) at the Joyce Center in the opening round of the 16-team event.

Notre Dame will enter the 2004-05 campaign with a 20-game home winning streak, the eighth-longest active run in the nation and the second-longest in school history. This year's season opener also will have two added twists — it will be the earliest debut for the Irish since the program's second season (an 81-51 win over Clark College on Nov. 1, 1978), and it follows the traditional Friday night football pep rally at the Joyce Center that precedes the Notre Dame-Pittsburgh football game the next afternoon.

The winner of the Notre Dame/Illinois State first-round matchup will meet the winner of the Western Illinois/Nebraska contest on Sunday, Nov. 14. The semifinals are scheduled for Nov. 17 with the championship game slated for Nov. 20. All WNIT games are played at campus sites, which are determined upon the conclusion of the previous round.

The Irish are one of nine teams in this year's Preseason WNIT field that qualified for postseason play last year, joining Arizona, Duke, Middle Tennessee, Nebraska, Ohio State, Rice, Saint Joseph's (Pa.) and South Florida.

The Irish have met Illinois State twice before, with each side winning on the other's home floor. Notre Dame defeated the Redbirds, 48-47, on Feb. 19, 1983, in Normal, Ill., before ISU returned the favor with a 61-59 win on Feb. 8, 1984, at the Joyce Center. The Irish are 23-2 (.920) all-time against MVC teams, including a 14-1 (.933) record in McGraw's 17-year tenure, and they have a lifetime mark of 10-1 (.909) against the MVC at the Joyce Center (7-0 under McGraw).

Notre Dame last played in the Preseason WNIT eight years ago, advancing to the

semifinals with wins over Kent State (66-41) and No. 6 Iowa (61-50). Following a 72-59 loss to third-ranked Tennessee in the semifinals, the Irish rebounded to defeat No. 8 North Carolina State 64-53 in the consolation game. **Katryna Gaither** earned a spot on the Preseason WNIT all-tournament team after making a tournament-record 42 field goals in the four-game set (a record that still stands). Notre Dame went on to log a 31-7 record in 1996-97, advancing to its first NCAA Final Four.

The Irish will be looking to continue the BIG EAST Conference's run of success in the Preseason WNIT. BIG EAST teams have reached the semifinals six times in the 10-year history of the tournament, with Connecticut winning titles in 1997 and 2001. Last season, Rutgers made its second trip to the Preseason WNIT finals, bowing to Texas Tech, 73-45.

Setting Records In The Classroom

The Irish women's basketball team posted a 3.343 combined grade-point average for the spring 2004 semester, the highest mark in the program's 28-year history. In addition, the Irish have recorded team GPAs of 3.1 or better in seven of their last eight semesters.

Notre Dame also placed nine players on the 2003-04 BIG EAST Conference Academic All-Star Team, including current players **Jacqueline Batteast**, **Teresa Borton**, **Megan Duffy** and **Susie Powers**. Honorees must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better and have completed a minimum of two semesters of academic work.

Riley Wins Gold Medal At 2004 Olympics

Former Notre Dame All-America center and 2001 consensus National Player of the Year **Ruth Riley** celebrated her 25th birthday in style on Aug. 28 as she and her United States women's basketball teammates won the gold medal at the 2004 Olympic Games with a 74-63 victory over Australia at the Olympic Indoor Hall in Athens, Greece. With the win, Riley took her place in the basketball history books as one of five players ever to win an NCAA, WNBA and Olympic championship, joining her Olympic teammates **Sheryl Swoopes** and **Swin Cash**, as well as **Cynthia Cooper** and **Kara Wolters**.

Riley saw action in seven of Team USA's eight games at this year's Olympics, averaging 3.4 points and 2.4 rebounds per game with a .667 field goal percentage (10-of-15).

Riley's gold medal capped off the most successful Olympiad ever for Notre Dame athletics. Four former Irish standouts struck gold in Athens, with current freshman fencer **Mariel Zagunis** (women's sabre) and former soccer greats **Kate Sobrero** (Markgraf) and **Shannon Boxx** also won Olympic titles.



Irish head coach Muffet McGraw is poised to win her 400th game at Notre Dame later this season.



Roster Breakdowns

By Class

Seniors.....	2
Juniors.....	2
Sophomores.....	3
Freshmen.....	4

By Position

Guards.....	6
Forwards.....	3
Centers.....	2

By State

California.....	2
Nevada.....	2
Ohio.....	2
Colorado.....	1
Indiana.....	1
New York.....	1
Pennsylvania.....	1
Washington.....	1

By Height

D'Amico.....	6-5
Borton.....	6-3
LaVere.....	6-3
Batteast.....	6-2
Erwin.....	6-1
Allen.....	5-11
Powers.....	5-10
Tsipis.....	5-10
Duffy.....	5-7
Gray.....	5-7
Gaines.....	5-6

Pronunciation Guide

<u>Charel Allen</u>	shuh-RELL
<u>Jacqueline Batteast</u>	BATT-eest
<u>Melissa D'Amico</u>	duh-MEE-ko
<u>Tulyah Gaines</u>	tuh-LIE-uh
<u>Breona Gray</u>	bree-ON-uh
<u>Courtney LaVere</u>	luh-VEER
<u>Amanda Tsipis</u>	SIP-iss
<u>Coquese Washington</u>	ko-KWEES
<u>Rancho Cucamonga</u>	KOO-kuh-MUN-guh
<u>Chaminade-Julienne HS</u>	SHAH-min-ODD
<u>Monessen, Pa.</u>	mo-NESS-n



Seated (left to right): Breona Gray, Amanda Tsipis, Crystal Erwin, Jacqueline Batteast, head coach Muffet McGraw, Megan Duffy, Susie Powers, Tulyah Gaines and Charel Allen. Standing (left to right): Senior manager Caitlin Early, assistant strength and conditioning coordinator Tony Rolinski, assistant coach Jonathan Tsipis, associate athletic trainer Michael Miller, Teresa Borton, Melissa D'Amico, Courtney LaVere, associate coach Carol Owens, coordinator of basketball operations Heather Maxwell, senior manager Kathleen Tallmadge and assistant coach Coquese Washington.

Numerical

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Yr.-Exp.	Hometown (High School)
1	Tulyah Gaines	G	5-6	Fr.-HS	North Las Vegas, Nev. (Cheyenne HS)
2	Charel Allen	G	5-11	Fr.-HS	Monessen, Pa. (Monessen HS)
3	Susie Powers	G	5-10	So.-1V	Centennial, Colo. (Highlands Ranch HS)
11	Amanda Tsipis	G	5-10	Fr.-HS	Perry, Ohio (Perry HS)
12	Teresa Borton (C)	C	6-3	Sr.-3V	Yakima, Wash. (West Valley HS)
13	Megan Duffy (C)	G	5-7	Jr.-2V	Dayton, Ohio (Chaminade-Julienne HS)
21	Jacqueline Batteast (C)	F	6-2	Sr.-3V	South Bend, Ind. (Washington HS)
32	Breona Gray	G	5-7	So.-1V	Las Vegas, Nev. (Bishop Gorman HS)
33	Melissa D'Amico	F/C	6-5	Fr.-HS	Manorville, N.Y. (William Floyd HS)
34	Crystal Erwin	F	6-1	So.-1V	Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. (St. Paul HS)
41	Courtney LaVere	F	6-3	Jr.-2V	Ventura, Calif. (Buena HS)

(C) - indicates team captain

Alphabetical

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Yr.-Exp.	Hometown (High School)
2	Charel Allen	G	5-11	Fr.-HS	Monessen, Pa. (Monessen HS)
21	Jacqueline Batteast (C)	F	6-2	Sr.-3V	South Bend, Ind. (Washington HS)
12	Teresa Borton (C)	C	6-3	Sr.-3V	Yakima, Wash. (West Valley HS)
33	Melissa D'Amico	F/C	6-5	Fr.-HS	Manorville, N.Y. (William Floyd HS)
13	Megan Duffy (C)	G	5-7	Jr.-2V	Dayton, Ohio (Chaminade-Julienne HS)
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3	Susie Powers	G	5-10	So.-1V	Centennial, Colo. (Highlands Ranch HS)
11	Amanda Tsipis	G	5-10	Fr.-HS	Perry, Ohio (Perry HS)

(C) - indicates team captain

Coaching Staff

Name	Position	Year	Alma Mater	Year Graduated
Muffet McGraw	Head Coach	18th	Saint Joseph's (Pa.)	1977
Carol Owens	Associate Coach	10th*	Northern Illinois	1990
Coquese Washington	Assistant Coach	6th	Notre Dame	1992
Jonathan Tsipis	Assistant Coach	2nd	North Carolina	1996
Heather Maxwell	Coordinator of Basketball Ops.	4th	Indianapolis	1999

* - Carol Owens is in her 10th season at Notre Dame and her third as associate coach.

