

# Season Preview



*A veteran Irish team looks to vault Notre Dame back on top of the BIG EAST Conference in 2009. The bulk of the 2008 offensive production and both starting pitchers from last season's roster will be in action for the upcoming campaign.*



## Full Steam Ahead

*Deep and experienced roster should bring out the best for 2009 squad*

Many programs would bask in the success exhibited by the Notre Dame softball team during the Deanna Gumpf era: nearly 300 wins in just seven seasons, seven consecutive trips to the NCAA Tournament, four regular-season BIG EAST Conference titles and a league tournament championship trophy.

But the taste of success for Gumpf and the Irish has not been enough. They want a bite. And with one of the most experienced teams in Gumpf's tenure at Notre Dame, the 2009 edition of the Irish softball team could be poised to make a deep run into the postseason. Notre Dame received 12 votes in the USA Today/NFCA Division I Top 25 preseason poll.

"This program is ready to make the next step," Gumpf said. "We've been close so many times. We know what it takes, we know what we're up against, and we're ready to make that run."

The Irish return all of their firepower from the circle in senior Brittney Bargar and sophomore Jody Valdivia. Bargar was a dominating force as a junior in 2008 with 30 wins and 244 strikeouts in 291.1 innings of work. Her 1.47 ERA was among the lowest in the nation while the righty also had a pair of no-hitters. Bargar totaled eight shutouts and combined for one more with Valdivia. Valdivia was impressive in her first year with the Irish and showed flashes of brilliance with a tremendous repertoire of pitches. Her 8-7 record and 3.13 ERA in 2008 may be deceiving, as she averaged 1.18 strikeouts/inning – including 14 in one game against Eastern Michigan – and wowed the coaching staff perhaps more than any Irish player this past fall.

On the latter half of the battery, junior Alexia Clay is primed to return to the field after spending her sophomore season as a redshirt. The transfer from Tennessee and Indiana native was among the top freshmen in the nation in 2007 while leading the Lady Volunteers to the Women's College World Series. Clay carries a big stick to the plate and could emerge as one of Notre Dame's most dominant sluggers. She'll share time behind the plate with freshman Kristina Wright, a 5-9 natural signal caller with sharp softball instincts and athleticism to spare. Notre Dame utilized three catchers in 2008 – Erin Marrone, Shannon Kelly and Sadie Pitzenberger – but each of those have made the shift to other positions from which they can better benefit the team.

A wealth of players will be competing for show time in the infield. Four all-BIG EAST performers in sophomore Katie Fleury, juniors Christine Lux and Heather Johnson along with senior Linda Kohan should carry most of the



*Sadie Pitzenberger led Notre Dame and the BIG EAST Conference in a number of statistical categories before sidelined with a season-ending injury in 2008. Now fully recovered, the signal caller will direct traffic for the Irish defense from the field.*

load. Pitzenberger will make the switch to the middle infield, sharing the shortstop and second base positions with Fleury. They will fill the void left by graduated senior Katie Laing, who cemented herself as one of the most proficient fielders in Irish history with the program's career assists record. At the corners will be a rotation consisting of Kohan, Johnson and Lux. The trio combined for 22 home runs and 81 RBI in 2008 – despite Johnson playing in only 11 games before her season ended with a knee injury – and each of the three state a legitimate argument to provide power at the plate for the Irish. Freshmen Kasey O'Connor and Dani Miller displayed their skills this past fall and could possibly work their way into the lineup before all is said and done.

The outfield loses an all-NFCA Mideast Region player in Sarah Smith and her 60 hits in 2008, but returns sophomore Brianna Jorgensborg who saw action in each of the team's 61 contests last season. Senior Stephanie Mola returns to the grass from a wrist injury and will

join Jorgensborg, an all-BIG EAST choice in 2008. Marrone and senior Beth Northway will combat for a spot in the field along with freshman Alexa Maldonado.

Northway, Marrone, Pitzenberger, Kelly and senior Christine Farrell are among the players that should anticipate seeing action at a number of positions if called upon.

The team's 2009 schedule includes contests with four Women's College World Series squads from 2008 including reigning national champion Arizona State.

"Year after year we want to play the best teams in the nation, and this schedule shows that we're ready to do so yet again in 2009," Gumpf said. "Not only will we play some of the other top programs across the nation but we have the opportunity to face the best teams in this region as well."

Starting the season at the Bama Bash Feb. 13-15 in Tuscaloosa, Ala., Notre Dame will join No. 3 Alabama, East Carolina and Wisconsin in the



field. One week later (Feb. 20-22) the Irish head to Stanford's Nike Invitational along with Sacramento State and Western Kentucky. Stanford is ranked 11th heading into the season.

North Carolina State welcomes Notre Dame from Feb.28-March 1 for the Wolfpack Challenge. Rounding out the field with the Irish will be College of Charleston, Canisius and Buffalo.

The second of Notre Dame's westward-bound trips comes March 7 at the UNLV Invitational in Las Vegas, Nev. The Irish face the host Rebels and Texas Tech on the opening day of play with UC Santa Barbara and the Red Raiders waiting on March 8.

A single contest at No. 4 UCLA (March 10) will serve as a tune-up for the prestigious Judi Garman Classic in Fullerton, Calif. The stacked field, including Penn State, No. 10 Oklahoma, Pacific, No. 7 Arizona and No. 2 Arizona State, will each get a shot at the Irish from March 12-15.

Opening the home portion of the schedule with four straight dates at Melissa Cook Stadium, Notre Dame will first challenge Toledo in a March 18 twinbill. BIG EAST Conference play begins with a visit from St. John's (March 22) with non-conference foes Ball State (March 24) and Western Michigan (March 25) coming to town soon after.

A trip to first-year league member Georgetown (March 28) sets the stage for a flight



Senior Brittney Bargar is a strong candidate for All-America honors in 2009 after finishing her third season with the Irish among the nation's top pitchers in terms of ERA and total wins.

to USF (March 29). Consecutive home doubleheaders with Pittsburgh (April 4), Seton Hall (April 5) and No. 15 DePaul (April 8) along with a home match with Valparaiso (April 9) precede the longest road swing of the regular season. Notre Dame flies to Connecticut (April 11), visits Wisconsin (April 14) and then double-dips at Villanova (April 18) and Rutgers (April 19). The final road trip will be an April 30 matchup at Providence.

No. 9 Northwestern (April 21) and North Dakota State (April 22) are set to come to town on consecutive dates with Notre Dame's Senior Day scheduled for May 3 when the Irish face Louisville.

The 2009 BIG EAST Championship will be held at Louisville's Ulmer Stadium May 7-9. NCAA Tournament play starts on campus sites May 14 and concludes with the WCWS in Oklahoma City, Okla., May 29-June 9.

Alabama, East Carolina, Sacramento State, Stanford, Canisius, UCLA, Oklahoma, Arizona, Arizona State, USF, DePaul, Northwestern and Louisville each earned invitations to last year's NCAA Tournament. Alabama, UCLA, Arizona and Arizona State were WCWS participants.

## Breaking Down the Irish

... with head coach Deanna Gumpf

### On the team ...

"I think we are an explosive team this season. There is so much athleticism and power on this roster, both in the field and at the plate. The competition for playing time is heated, and that will bring out the best performances in our players. Our hitting and base running is very determined. We are deep and experienced, and hope to transform all of this talent into victories."

### On the pitching staff ...

"We have a mature pitching staff in Brittney Bargar and Jody Valdivia. Brittney is ready to lead the team and she can win some big games for us. Jody has grown a lot during the offseason. She is so competitive and is throwing very hard, and we expect her to pitch right behind, if not on the same level, as Brittney."

### On the catchers ...

"We are excited about our catchers and what they are going to bring to the battery. With a veteran like Alexia Clay and the strength of our freshman Kristina Wright, we have a very strong duo behind the plate. I look forward to having them spend more time with our pitchers, and whoever we put back there will certainly help this team win."

### On the infield ...

"At the corners we have Christine Lux, Linda Kohan and Heather Johnson. At any time, we could have any combination of the three because they are each strong at the corners and will interchange at those spots all year long. In the middle we will have a combination of Sadie Pitzenberger and Katie Fleury. They are so smooth at second base and shortstop with incredible arms and glove work. Kohan, Kasey O'Connor and Dani Miller could also play second when called upon."

### On the outfield ...

"Sharing time will be Stephanie Mola, Brianna Jorgensborg, Alexa Maldonado, Erin Marrone and Beth Northway. Each brings something to the table, and they push each other everyday at practice. We are very confident that whoever we put in the outfield, they'll get the job done."

### On the batting lineup ...

"We know we can put anyone in the lineup and they'll be able to perform at the plate. Pitzenberger and Fleury share many of the same qualities with the ability to get on base and cross the plate, so they will make their way to the top of the lineup. Johnson, Lux, Clay, Kohan and Northway carry big bats. Marrone and Jorgensborg put together some great at-bats last season, and with some of the performances I saw across the board this past fall, it will be hard to narrow the lineup to just nine players."

### On the schedule ...

"The schedule is very balanced from top to bottom. I think we got the best of the best, and the schedule is very fitting for the type of team we'll field this season. We will be at home a little more this year than previous seasons which will give us a chance to use and showcase our new stadium."

### On the BIG EAST Conference ...

"The league gets tougher and tougher each season, as evident by the four teams (Notre Dame, DePaul, Louisville and USF) that made the NCAA Tournament in 2008. We are in the BIG EAST to win the regular-season and tournament titles."

# Team Roster / Photo

## Numerical

No.	Name	Year	Position	Height	B / T	Hometown	High school
3	Heather Johnson	Jr.	Infield	5-8	R / R	Los Alamitos, Calif.	Mater Dei
5	Shannon Kelly	So.	Pitcher / Utility	5-7	R / R	Pembroke Pines, Fla.	Hollywood Christian
6	Kasey O'Connor	Fr.	Infield	6-0	R / R	Yorktown, N.Y.	Yorktown
7	Sadie Pitzenberger	So.	Infield / Outfield	5-7	L / R	Tomball, Texas	Tomball
8	Brittney Bargar	Sr.	Pitcher	5-9	R / R	Corona, Calif.	Corona
9	Jody Valdivia	So.	Pitcher	5-8	R / R	Anaheim Hills, Calif.	Canyon
10	Christine Lux	Jr.	Infield	5-11	L / R	Glendale Heights, Ill.	Glenbard West
12	Katie Fleury	So.	Infield	5-5	R / R	San Jose, Calif.	Archbishop Mitty
13	Alexa Maldonado	Fr.	Outfield	5-6	L / L	Short Hills, N.J.	Millburn
14	Beth Northway	Sr.	Outfield	5-7	R / R	Kentwood, Mich.	East Kentwood
17	Dani Miller	Fr.	Infield	5-9	R / R	Huntington Beach, Calif.	Edison
18	Christine Farrell	Sr.	Pitcher	5-8	R / R	La Habra, Calif.	Sonora
19	Erin Marrone	So.	Infield / Outfield	5-9	R / R	Alexandria, Va.	Bishop O'Connell
21	Linda Kohan	Sr.	Infield	5-6	R / R	Westminster, Calif.	Westminster
23	Stephanie Mola	Sr.	Outfield	5-5	L / L	Naples, Fla.	St. John Neumann
24	Brianna Jorgensborg	So.	Outfield	5-11	R / R	Thousand Oaks, Calif.	La Reina
27	Alexia Clay	Jr.	Catcher	5-6	R / R	Rochester, Ind.	Culver
35	Kristina Wright	Fr.	Catcher	5-9	R / R	Ramona, Calif.	Ramona

## Alphabetical

No.	Name	Year	Position	Height	B / T	Hometown	High school
8	Brittney Bargar	Sr.	Pitcher	5-9	R / R	Corona, Calif.	Corona
27	Alexia Clay	Jr.	Catcher	5-6	R / R	Rochester, Ind.	Culver
18	Christine Farrell	Sr.	Pitcher	5-8	R / R	La Habra, Calif.	Sonora
12	Katie Fleury	So.	Infield	5-5	R / R	San Jose, Calif.	Archbishop Mitty
3	Heather Johnson	Jr.	Infield	5-8	R / R	Los Alamitos, Calif.	Mater Dei
24	Brianna Jorgensborg	So.	Outfield	5-11	R / R	Thousand Oaks, Calif.	La Reina
5	Shannon Kelly	So.	Pitcher / Utility	5-7	R / R	Pembroke Pines, Fla.	Hollywood Christian
21	Linda Kohan	Sr.	Infield	5-6	R / R	Westminster, Calif.	Westminster
10	Christine Lux	Jr.	Infield	5-11	L / R	Glendale Heights, Ill.	Glenbard West
13	Alexa Maldonado	Fr.	Outfield	5-6	L / L	Short Hills, N.J.	Millburn
19	Erin Marrone	So.	Infield / Outfield	5-9	R / R	Alexandria, Va.	Bishop O'Connell
17	Dani Miller	Fr.	Infield	5-9	R / R	Huntington Beach, Calif.	Edison
23	Stephanie Mola	Sr.	Outfield	5-5	L / L	Naples, Fla.	St. John Neumann
14	Beth Northway	Sr.	Outfield	5-7	R / R	Kentwood, Mich.	East Kentwood
6	Kasey O'Connor	Fr.	Infield	6-0	R / R	Yorktown, N.Y.	Yorktown
7	Sadie Pitzenberger	So.	Infield / Outfield	5-7	L / R	Tomball, Texas	Tomball
9	Jody Valdivia	So.	Pitcher	5-8	R / R	Anaheim Hills, Calif.	Canyon
35	Kristina Wright	Fr.	Catcher	5-9	R / R	Ramona, Calif.	Ramona

**Head coach:** Deanna Gumpf (8th season / Nebraska '92)  
**Assistant coaches:** Kris Ganeff (8th season / Notre Dame '99)  
 Lizzy Lemire (4th season / Notre Dame '01)  
**Volunteer assistant:** Dawn Austin (4th season / Penn State '93)  
**Athletic trainer:** Nicole Alexander (1st season / Florida '05)  
**Student manager:** Bridget Cullen (Notre Dame '09)

### Pronunciations

Brittney Bargar	.....Brittney BAR-gur
Christine Farrell	.....Christine FAIR-uhl
Katie Fleury	.....Katie FLURRY
Kris Ganeff	.....Kris GAYN-ef
Brianna Jorgensborg	.....BREE-ann-UH Jorgensborg
Linda Kohan	.....Linda co-HANN
Lizzy Lemire	.....Lizzy LEH-meer
Christine Lux	.....Christine LUCKS
Alexa Maldonado	.....Alexa MAL-done-AH-doe
Erin Marrone	.....Erin MUH-roan
Stephanie Mola	.....Stephanie MOLE-uh
Sadie Pitzenberger	.....Sadie PITT-sin-BURGER
Jody Valdivia	.....Jody VAL-dee-vee-uh



### 2009 Notre Dame Softball Team

— front (l-r): Shannon Kelly, Alexa Maldonado, Sadie Pitzenberger, Katie Fleury, Alexia Clay — middle: Jody Valdivia, Linda Kohan, Beth Northway, Brittney Bargar, Christine Farrell, Stephanie Mola, Dani Miller, Ashley Ellis — back: sports information director Alan George, strength and conditioning coach Chris Sandeen, athletic trainer Nicole Anderson, senior manager Bridget Cullen, Christine Lux, Erin Marrone, Heather Johnson, Kristina Wright, Kasey O'Connor, Brianna Jorgensborg, assistant coach Kris Ganeff, assistant coach Lizzy Lemire, volunteer assistant coach Dawn Austin, head coach Deanna Gumpf



# Preseason Information / Roster Breakdown

## USA Today / NFCA Division I Top 25 Preseason Poll

### 2009 BIG EAST Preseason Poll

	Points	2008	2008	2008 BIG EAST
		Overall Record	BIG EAST Record	Regular Season Finish
DePaul (9)	140	51-18	16-6	2nd
USF (4)	132	44-20	16-4	1st
Louisville	116	31-23	12-8	5th
<b>Notre Dame</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>38-22-1</b>	<b>14-8</b>	<b>4th</b>
Connecticut	102	28-22	13-7	3rd
Syracuse	81	21-32	12-10	6th
Pittsburgh	70	31-25	12-10	7th
Providence	67	25-25	8-12	8th
Villanova	52	21-29	7-15	9th
St. John's	42	20-35	5-17	12th
Rutgers	43	23-32	7-15	10th
Seton Hall	35	20-33	6-16	11th
*Georgetown	15	21-35	--	--

(x) indicates first place votes

\* Georgetown was not a softball member of the BIG EAST in 2008

The **BIG EAST Conference** -- DePaul won its first BIG EAST softball championship in 2008 and has carried that success into top billing on the 2009 BIG EAST Softball Preseason Coaches' Poll. Nine of the BIG EAST's 13 head coaches gave the Blue Demons first-place votes, edging out defending BIG EAST regular-season champion USF by five votes. The coaches were not permitted to vote for their own teams.

With the Blue Demons and Bulls collecting all available first-place votes, the next two squads in line, Louisville and Notre Dame, share the poll's third slot. The Cardinals finished fifth in last season's final standings, while the Fighting Irish finished fourth. Both teams joined DePaul and USF in the NCAA Championship.

This year's BIG EAST Championship returns to Louisville's Ulmer Stadium for the second straight season from May 7-9.

Rank	Team	Final 2008 Record	Final 2008 Rank
1.	Florida	70-5	3
2.	Arizona State	66-5	1
3.	Alabama	58-8	4
4.	UCLA	51-9	5
5.	Texas A&M	57-10	2
6.	Louisiana-Lafayette	52-15	6
7.	Arizona	41-19	7
8.	Michigan	52-8	9
9.	Northwestern	40-16	12
10.	Oklahoma	47-14	10
11.	Stanford	49-15	11
12.	Tennessee	50-16	14
13.	Houston	54-11	13
14.	Fresno State	54-13	15
15.	DePaul	51-18	22
16.	Missouri	47-17	19
17.	California	34-32	16
18.	North Carolina	50-12-1	20
19.	LSU	44-18	18
20.	Virginia Tech	49-19	8
21.	Washington	30-25-1	--
22.	Georgia	46-24	17
23.	Nevada	44-18	26
24.	Long Beach State	40-17	23
25.	San Diego State	44-17	24

RV: UMass 68, Mississippi State 46, Iowa 43, USF 42, Hofstra 27, Oklahoma State 19, BYU 17, Hawaii 15, **Notre Dame 12**, Nebraska 8, Purdue 8, Central Florida 8, Creighton 6, Auburn 6, Oregon 4, Oregon State 4, Jacksonville State 4, East Carolina 4, Louisiana Tech 3, Texas 2, UT-Chattanooga 2.

The USA Today/NFCA Division I Top 25 Poll is voted on by NCAA Division I head coaches representing each conference.

### Top Returnees

**Brittney Bargar / P / Sr.**

(30-15, 1.47 ERA, 39 GS, 32 CG, 8 SHO, 291.1 IP, 244 K)

**Linda Kohan / IF / Sr.**

(.302 BA, 45 H, 23 R, 8 2B, 6 HR, 31 RBI, 71 TB, .456 OB%)

**Christine Lux / IF / Jr.**

(.277 BA, 46 H, 33 R, 8 2B, 2 3B, 15 HR, 42 RBI, 103 TB)

**Katie Fleury / IF / So.**

(.295 BA, 45 H, 23 R, 7 2B, 3 3B, 4 HR, 26 RBI)

### Key Losses

**Katie Laing / IF**

(.263 BA, 50 H, 31 R, 11 2B, 3 3B, 7 HR, 50 RBI, 88 TB)

**Sarah Smith / OF**

(.370 BA, 60 H, 32 R, 6 2B, 14 RBI, 13 SH, 9 SB, 66 TB)

### Newcomers

**Alexa Maldonado / OF** (Short Hills, N.J. / Millburn)

**Dani Miller / IF** (Huntington Beach, Calif. / Edison)

**Kasey O'Connor / IF** (Yorktown, N.Y. / Yorktown)

**Kristina Wright / C** (Ramona, Calif. / Ramona)

### Roster Breakdown by ...

#### Class

##### Seniors (5)

Bargar, Farrell, Mola, Northway, Kohan

##### Juniors (3)

Clay, Johnson, Lux

##### Sophomores (6)

Fleury, Jorgensborg, Kelly, Marrone,

Pitzenberger, Valdivia

##### Freshmen (4)

Maldonado, Miller, O'Connor, Wright

#### Position

##### Pitcher (3)

Bargar, Kelly, Valdivia

##### Catcher (2)

Clay, Wright

##### Infield (8)

Fleury, Johnson, Kohan, Lux, Marrone, Miller,

O'Connor, Pitzenberger

##### Outfield (6)

Jorgensborg, Maldonado, Marrone, Mola,

Northway, Pitzenberger

##### Utility (2)

Farrell, Kelly

#### State

##### California (9)

Bargar, Farrell, Fleury, Johnson, Jorgensborg,

Kohan, Miller, Valdivia, Wright

##### Florida (2)

Kelly, Mola

##### Illinois (1)

Lux

##### Indiana (1)

Clay

##### Michigan (1)

Northway

##### New Jersey (1)

Maldonado

##### New York (1)

O'Connor

##### Texas (1)

Pitzenberger

##### Virginia (1)

Marrone

# TV Roster



**Deanna Gumpf**  
Head Coach  
8th season  
Nebraska '93



**Kris Ganeff**  
Assistant Coach  
8th season  
Notre Dame '99



**Lizzy Lemire**  
Assistant Coach  
4th season  
Notre Dame '01



**Dawn Austin**  
Volunteer Assistant  
Coach  
4th season  
Penn State '93



**3 Heather Johnson**  
Junior • Infield  
5-8 • R/R  
Los Alamitos, Calif.  
Mater Dei



**5 Shannon Kelly**  
Sophomore  
Pitcher / Utility  
5-7 • R/R  
Pembroke Pines, Fla.  
Hollywood Christian



**6 Kasey O'Connor**  
Freshman • Infield  
6-0 • R/R  
Yorktown, N.Y.  
Yorktown



**7 Sadie Pitznerberger**  
Sophomore  
Infield / Outfield  
5-7 • L/R  
Tomball, Texas  
Tomball



**8 Brittney Bargar**  
Senior • Pitcher  
5-9 • R/R  
Corona, Calif.  
Corona



**9 Jody Valdivia**  
Sophomore • Pitcher  
5-8 • R/R  
Anaheim Hills, Calif.  
Canyon



**10 Christine Lux**  
Junior • Infield  
5-11 • L/R  
Glendale Heights, Ill.  
Glenbard West



**12 Katie Fleury**  
Sophomore • Infield  
5-5 • R/R  
San Jose, Calif.  
Archbishop Mitty



**13 Alexa Maldonado**  
Freshman • Outfield  
5-6 • L/L  
Short Hills, N.J.  
Millburn



**14 Beth Northway**  
Senior • Outfield  
5-7 • R/R  
Kentwood, Mich.  
East Kentwood



**17 Dani Miller**  
Freshman • Infield  
5-9 • R/R  
Huntington Beach, Calif.  
Edison



**18 Christine Farrell**  
Senior • Pitcher  
5-8 • R/R  
La Habra, Calif.  
Sonora



**19 Erin Marrone**  
Sophomore  
Infield / Outfield  
5-9 • R/R  
Alexandria, Va.  
Bishop O'Connell



**21 Linda Kohan**  
Senior • Infield  
5-6 • R/R  
Westminster, Calif.  
Westminster



**23 Stephanie Mola**  
Senior • Outfield  
5-5 • L/L  
Naples, Fla.  
St. John Neumann



**24 Brianna Jorgensborg**  
Sophomore • Outfield  
5-11 • R/R  
Thousand Oaks, Calif.  
La Reina



**27 Alexia Clay**  
Junior • Catcher  
5-6 • R/R  
Rochester, Ind.  
Culver



**35 Kristina Wright**  
Freshman • Catcher  
5-9 • R/R  
Ramona, Calif.  
Ramona

