



2003 LSU BASEBALL

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2003 LSU BASEBALL NOTEBOOK
SEASON IN REVIEW
FINAL RECORD: 45-22-1

SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS
SEC TOURNAMENT RUNNERS-UP
BATON ROUGE REGIONAL AND SUPER REGIONAL CHAMPIONS
TIED FOR SEVENTH PLACE, COLLEGE WORLD SERIES

Last week's results (0-2):

COLLEGE WORLD SERIES, OMAHA

Friday, June 13—lost to Cal St. Fullerton, 8-2

Sunday, June 15—lost to South Carolina, 11-10

Final rankings:

No. 5—Baseball America

No. 7—Collegiate Baseball

Notes from Omaha:

- With its ranking of fifth in the final Baseball America poll, LSU finished ranked in the top five in at least one of the three major polls for the 11th time since the 1986 season. LSU finished as national champion in 1991, 1993, 1996, 1997 and 2000, tied for third in 1989, 1990 and 1998, fourth in 1987 and fifth in 1986 and 2003. LSU also is in the final top 10 for the 14th time since 1986 and the seventh time in the past eight years, missing out with a No. 11 final ranking in 2002.
- LSU made its 12th all-time appearance in the College World Series, tying the Tigers with Cal St. Fullerton for 9th on the all-time list. Texas leads the way with 30 trips to the CWS, with USC, Miami (Fla.), Oklahoma St., Florida St., Arizona St., Stanford and Arizona rounding out the top 10.
- LSU continued a legacy of excellence under coaches Skip Bertman and Smoke Laval, as no player who has stayed in the LSU program at least three years since Bertman's arrival in 1984 has failed to reach the CWS. The Tigers' drought in 2001 and 2002 was the Tigers' only two-year setback since their first trip to Omaha in 1986.
- With LSU and South Carolina both making it to Omaha, the Southeastern Conference has now had at least one team reach the CWS in 18 of the last 19 seasons, missing out only in 1992.
- The Tigers' 0-2 finish in Omaha represents just LSU's second two-and-out trip to the CWS. LSU was 0-2 in 1994 after losing to Florida St. and Cal St. Fullerton. The Tigers have finished as national champions five times (1991, 1993, 1996, 1997, 2000), tied for third three times (1989, 1990, 1998), fourth in 1987 and tied for fifth in 1986.



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- LSU ends the CWS with a 29-15 overall record in Omaha, good for a .659 winning percentage. The Tigers are 99-37 all-time in the NCAA tournament, as their .728 percentage leaves them with the highest percentage in the history of the tournament.
- The Tigers' loss to Cal St. Fullerton in the opening round dropped LSU to 8-4 all-time in the first game of the CWS. LSU's losses in opening round games are to Loyola-Marymount in 1986 (LSU's first ever CWS game), Miami (Fla.) in 1989, Florida St. in 1994 and Fullerton this year.
- Only once when losing their first game have the Tigers recovered to finish in the top four, and that was in 1989, when LSU followed the loss to Miami with wins over Long Beach St. and the Hurricanes before losing to Texas.
- LSU's loss in its second CWS game to South Carolina was the Tigers' first setback to an SEC school in seven games in Omaha. The Tigers had previously defeated Florida twice in both 1991 and 1996, Alabama in the 1997 championship game and Mississippi St. in 1998. LSU had also defeated Arkansas in 1987, but that was when the Razorbacks were still in the now-defunct Southwest Conference.
- The LSU-South Carolina game was the 11th matchup of SEC teams in the CWS, not counting those games involving Arkansas and/or South Carolina prior to 1992.
- The Tigers' 11-10 loss to the Gamecocks also represented the first time in 11 tries that LSU lost a CWS game when scoring 10 or more runs. It also marked only the second time in 48 NCAA Tournament games and the third time in 65 post-season games overall that the Tigers lost when hitting double figures. LSU lost 11-10 to East Carolina in the 1999 Baton Rouge regional, and also lost 12-11 to Kentucky in the 1996 SEC Tournament.
- When LSU's comeback from a 6-0 deficit against South Carolina fell short, it denied the Tigers what would have been their greatest comeback in CWS history. The Tigers' biggest deficit overcome to win a CWS game was five, done in 1993 vs. Texas A&M when LSU rallied from a 7-2 deficit to claim a 13-8 win over the Aggies.
- LSU struggled throughout the CWS with runners in scoring position, hitting just .133 (2-for-15) with RBI opportunities in losses to Fullerton and South Carolina. LSU was 0-for-9 in the Fullerton game—the Tigers' worst RISP performance of the year—and then 2-for-6 vs. South Carolina.
- When sophomore DH Ryan Patterson hit a home run in the second inning of the Fullerton game, he became just the second LSU player to hit a home run in his first CWS plate appearance. The only other player to pull off the rare feat was Jeff Leaumont, who hit his in a pinch-hitting role in the ninth inning vs. Southern California on June 4, 1998.
- One of the bright spots of the CWS was the performance by redshirt freshman reliever Jason Determann. Determann, a southpaw who was named a Freshman All-America by Collegiate Baseball prior to the super regional, pitched 6 2/3 solid innings and threw 103 pitches.
- Sophomore DH Quinn Stewart also posted a strong outing in the CWS against South Carolina. Stewart, who made only one plate appearance in the regional and super regional rounds due a sprained left ankle suffered in warm-ups before the first regional game against Northeastern, launched a two-run home run, a sacrifice fly and drew a bases loaded walk for a season high four RBI. Stewart drove in five runs in his NCAA appearances, having collected an RBI double in the super regional finale vs. Baylor.
- This year's 0-2 performance at the CWS marks the fifth time in the last six years LSU has closed its season with consecutive losses. LSU lost its last two games of the 1998 CWS to Southern California, went 0-2 in super regionals in 1999 at Alabama and 2002 at Rice, and lost the final two games of the 2001 super regional to Tulane. The lone exception to this spell was the national championship season of 2000, when LSU went 13-0 in the post-season.



Notes from the 2003 season:

- The Tigers' 17-5 win over Mississippi St. on May 24 in the SEC tournament gave LSU its 40th win of the year, extending its streak of 40 win seasons to 15 in a row and 18 of the last 19. The Tigers' only season without 40 wins since 1985 was a 39-21 effort in 1988.
- The Tigers have now also enjoyed 21 consecutive winning seasons, the second longest streak in SEC history, surpassed only by the 28 consecutive winning seasons enjoyed by Mississippi St. since 1976.
- LSU won its first Southeastern Conference regular season championship since 1997 and its 13th overall since the league began playing baseball in 1933.
- The Tigers' SEC championship yielded two major awards from the conference, as coach Smoke Laval was named Coach of the Year, and junior SS Aaron Hill was named the Position Player of the Year.
- Laval is the sixth LSU coach to win the award, as every time the Tigers have won the conference, the coaching guiding the Tigers to the crown has won Coach of the Year honors.
- Hill is the fourth LSU player since 1993 to win the Player of the Year award from the SEC, joining Todd Walker in 1993, Russ Johnson in 1994 and Eddy Furniss in 1996.
- Joining Hill on the first team were a pair of sophomores in first baseman Clay Harris and designated hitter Ryan Patterson. It marks the second time in three years LSU has had three first team All-SEC picks, as three Tigers (Mike Fontenot, Lane Mestepey and the late Wally Pontiff) made the team in 2001.
- The Tigers also put three players on the All-SEC second team, all of whom will return to LSU in 2004: sophomore 2B Blake Gill and RF Jon Zeringue, along with junior RHP Nate Bumstead. The six LSU players honored by the conference office were the most for one school, tied with fellow CWS participant South Carolina.
- The Tigers' 13th SEC championship ties LSU with Alabama for the most conference championships in league history. Eight of the Tigers' 13 league crowns have come since Skip Bertman led LSU to the 1986 championship. LSU also won titles in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996 and 1997 under Bertman, while winning the title in 1939 and 1946 under Harry Rabenhorst, 1943 under Red Swanson, 1961 under Ray Didier and 1975 under Jim Smith.
- LSU coach Smoke Laval won the SEC title in his second season at LSU, marking the second time in the past three years that a coach in his second year at a school won the SEC title. However, when Ron Polk won the 2001 SEC title in his second and final year at Georgia, he had previously been the coach at Mississippi St. for 22 seasons (1976-97). Therefore, Laval is the first coach to win the conference championship in his first two years of coaching in the SEC since Jake Gibbs won the title as a rookie coach at Ole Miss in 1972.
- LSU continued its strong play against the SEC West, posting a 9-6 mark within its division, marking the 11th time in the 12 years since the league returned to division play in 1992 that the Tigers have had a winning record against the West. The lone exception came in 1995 when LSU was 9-11 vs. the West, with games in the SEC West tournament counting in the standings that season.
- LSU's 20-9-1 mark in the SEC is the Tigers' best since going 21-9 in 1998, and represents the Tigers' seventh season of 20 or more conference wins. The Tigers have posted at least 18 conference wins in 14 of the past 15 seasons, missing out only with a 17-12 mark in 1995. LSU has not posted a winning percentage of lower than .600 in the conference since the SEC went to a 30-game schedule in 1996.
- LSU has posted 19 consecutive winning records in the SEC, something that no other team in the league comes close to matching. The team with the next longest string of consecutive winning



- records in the SEC is Mississippi St. with five.
- The Tigers' 3-2 win over Florida on March 15 was LSU's 700th win in SEC play since 1933. LSU heads into 2004 with a 718-596-4 (.596) overall mark in conference play.
 - LSU also finished as runners-up in the SEC Tournament to Alabama, marking the 12th time that the Tigers have reached the finals of the conference tournament in 20 overall appearances since 1979. LSU's 49-28 (.636) mark leaves the Tigers with the most wins and highest winning percentage in SEC Tournament history.
 - The Tigers' strong regular season afforded LSU the opportunity to host an NCAA regional for the 14th consecutive year and 15th time since 1986. The 14 consecutive years as a regional host is the second longest streak in NCAA history, just two years shy of the record of 16 consecutive regionals hosted by Texas from 1979 through 1994.
 - LSU also won its eight consecutive regional championship, all at home, by sweeping Northeastern, Tulane and UNC Wilmington. LSU has won 14 of the 16 regionals contested in Baton Rouge, with the only other championships going to Cal St. Fullerton, which defeated Ohio St. in 1992 and Rice in 1995.
 - The Tigers improved to 65-15 all-time in regional round play at home, including a sterling 56-10 mark at Alex Box Stadium. LSU went undefeated in a regional at home for the sixth time (1991, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2003), and also went undefeated in 1987 at the University of New Orleans.
 - The Tigers' 9-8, 11-inning win over UNC Wilmington in the championship game of the regional improved LSU to 20-1 all-time in regional championship round games. The only loss came to Virginia Commonwealth in the first regional championship game.
 - LSU salted away its first CWS trip in three years by taking the final two games of the super regional against Baylor at home after losing the first game. The Tigers continued a trend by ousting the Bears, as the home team has won all five super regionals that LSU has played in. LSU also defeated UCLA at home in 2000, while losing at Alabama in 1999, Tulane in 2001 and Rice in 2002.
 - LSU's 20-run outburst in the super regional finale against Baylor was the Tigers' third uprising of 20 or more runs in an NCAA tournament game. LSU defeated Georgia Tech 29-13 in the final of the 1996 South II Regional, while defeating Louisiana-Monroe 21-0 in the 2000 regional.
 - The finale of the super regional against Baylor featured an 11-run sixth inning, tying the Tigers' biggest inning of the season. LSU also scored 11 runs in the fourth inning on April 27 vs. Tennessee and in the third inning on May 10 vs. Auburn. The 11-run outbursts were the Tigers' first double-digit inning since a 14-run uprising in the aforementioned 2000 regional game vs. UL-Monroe.
 - LSU continued to play very well at Alex Box Stadium, going 30-8-1 at home this year, marking the 12th time since 1985 and first time since 1998 that the Tigers have posted 30 or more wins at home in a single season. Over the last 20 years, LSU is 605-140-2 at home, a sterling .811 winning percentage.
 - LSU set yet another attendance record at The Box, drawing a record paid attendance of 291,676 for 39 home dates, an average of 7,476 per date. The season high for paid attendance came on May 10 with a crowd of 8,513 vs. Auburn. That crowd is the second largest paid crowd in Alex Box Stadium history, trailing only the 8,622 that saw LSU defeat Louisiana-Lafayette on April 11, 2000.
 - LSU also set a new actual attendance mark in the super regional finale vs. Baylor on June 8 with a crowd of 7,492. The old record for actual attendance was 7,460, which saw LSU sweep a May 9, 1992 doubleheader from Mississippi St.
 - On the subject of attendance, LSU's game with Tulane in the Louisiana Superdome on April 29



did not break the paid attendance record of 27,673 set in the 2002 LSU-Tulane game in the Superdome, but the paid crowd of 18,319 was the NCAA high for a regular season game.

- In their last 10 games played in New Orleans, LSU and Tulane have drawn crowds of at least 10,000 or more, eight times at Zephyr Field in Metairie (including a crowd of 10,870 for the March 11 games) and twice at the Superdome.
- A big reason behind LSU's tremendous season was one of the best defensive seasons turned in by the Tigers in recent memory. LSU cut its error total from 100 in 2002 to 73 in 2003, raising its fielding percentage from .962 to .972.
- This defensive prowess was best shown during a stretch in early April in which LSU did not commit an error in five consecutive games, a streak of 218 consecutive chances without an error, the longest streak in the modern history (since 1965) of LSU baseball.
- At the plate, LSU led the SEC with 85 home runs, a far cry from the days of Gorilla Ball when LSU hit 104 or more home runs in four consecutive years, but the 10th time in the last 11 years LSU has hit 81 or more home runs in a season. LSU hit just 65 home runs in 66 games in 2002, and had only one player in double figures in home runs, Matt Heath with 10. This year's team had three players with 13 or more home runs, as Clay Harris and Ryan Patterson hit 16 each and Jon Zeringue hit 13.
- Although LSU's final team ERA of 4.23 was up from the SEC leading 3.43 mark posted in 2002, there were several improvements made by the Tigers' injury ravaged staff. LSU walked 30 fewer batters (194 to 224) than in 2002 and gave up seven fewer hits over 13 1/3 more innings, allowing LSU opponents to hit just .264 compared to .271 in 2002.
- LSU relievers made exactly the same number of appearances (97) as they did in 2002, way down from the 151 appearances the Tiger bullpen made in 2001.
- Five LSU players were selected in the Major League Draft. Aaron Hill, as mentioned above, was the 13th overall pick in the first round by the Toronto Blue Jays, while Billy Sadler (6th round) and Brian Wilson (24th round), both junior right-handed pitchers, were taken by the San Francisco Giants. Two seniors who were drafted in 2002, senior right-handers Bo Pettit and Jake Tompkins, were taken in the 29th round by the Minnesota Twins and the 32nd round by the Philadelphia Phillies, respectively.

Notes on Tiger position players:

- For Aaron Hill, the SEC Player of the Year was the highlight of one of the strongest all-around seasons put together by an LSU hitter in many years. Hill finished the season with a team high .358 batting average, while also leading the Tigers in on-base percentage (.466), runs scored (68), RBI (67), doubles (27) and walks (47). The native of Visalia, Calif., also led the SEC in batting average in conference only games at .398.
- Hill, who was named the SEC Player of the Week following the Ole Miss series on April 14, as well as to the all-tournament teams of the SEC Tournament and the Baton Rouge regional, became LSU's 12th first-round draft choice on June 3 when the Toronto Blue Jays selected him in the first round with the 13th overall pick. Hill signed a contract with the Blue Jays on June 17 and is currently playing for the club's short-season Class A team in Auburn, N.Y.
- Hill finished his LSU career with 50 doubles, ranking him seventh on the Tigers' career list for doubles, with SEC career leader Eddy Furniss leading the way with 80. Hill's 27 doubles in 2003 tie him with Furniss' 1998 total for the second highest total in LSU history, behind only the NCAA record 36 by Brad Hawpe in 2000.
- Hill's biggest game of the year came on April 5 against South Carolina when he went 5-for-5 and hit for the cycle. Hill became the first LSU player to hit for the cycle since Mike Koerner did so



against VCU on March 1, 1997, and Hill became the 27th player to collect five hits in a game at LSU.

- Hill was also LSU's best clutch hitter, leading the way with a .400 average with runners in scoring position, while also batting .392 with 24 RBI with two out.
- Clay Harris did not begin the season in the starting lineup, as he was nursing a shoulder injury suffered while pitching during off-season practice. But when he was inserted into the lineup on March 2, he became one of the key cogs in the LSU lineup, earning first team All-SEC honors by hitting .346 in the regular season. Harris finished the full season as LSU's leader in slugging percentage at .635, tied for the team lead with 16 home runs and second on the club in RBI with 62.
- Harris' biggest hit of the year came on June 8 in the super regional finale vs. Baylor, when his grand slam highlighted an 11-run sixth inning to propel LSU to the CWS. Harris' grand slam was the only one in a game involving LSU this year, and the second of his career. Harris' first grand slam came in a pinch-hitting role on February 17, 2002 vs. Mercer in his first career plate appearance.
- Harris, a 2002 Freshman All-American as a pitcher, also was the only LSU player to hit two home runs in a game twice in 2003, doing so on March 30 at Alabama and April 13 at home against Ole Miss. Harris' first career two home run game came on March 10, 2002 vs. UL-Monroe.
- The Tigers' third first team All-SEC performer, Ryan Patterson, was one of the most consistent hitters in the LSU lineup. Patterson finished the CWS second on the team in batting average at .350, tied with Harris for the home run lead with 16, and was second on the Tigers in doubles (20), slugging percentage (.616), and was second in the SEC in batting average in conference games at .391.
- Patterson finished the season on a 10-game hitting streak, his longest streak of the season. Patterson had a nine-game streak and three other streaks of six or more games during the year, and hit safely in 56 of 64 games in which he played.
- Patterson enjoyed his first four-hit game on April 26 vs. Tennessee, and that game was part of a big series against the Volunteers, as he finished the set 9-for-14 with seven RBI to earn SEC Player of the Week honors.
- Patterson's second four-hit game came on May 31 in the Baton Rouge regional vs. Tulane, and was named to the all-tournament team for the regional with seven hits in three games.
- One of the best turnarounds of the year was fashioned by Jon Zeringue, as the sophomore recovered from an early season slump that landed him on the bench to finish the year ranked third on the Tigers with a .339 batting average. Zeringue batted .204 in February and was not in the starting lineup for three weeks, but returned to the lineup on March 22 at Georgia and batted .378 for the rest of the season.
- Zeringue's biggest game came in a key SEC showdown on May 9 vs. Auburn at home, as his two home runs were the difference in a 6-5 victory over the Tigers of the Plains.
- Zeringue's biggest single hit, though, came in the regional final vs. UNC Wilmington on June 1, when his home run with one out in the 11th inning gave LSU a 9-8 win to advance the Tigers to the super regional.
- Sophomore 2B Blake Gill started the season hot, getting two hits in each of the first four games of the season. After slumping during a 2-for-29 stretch in late February and early March, Gill recovered strong, batting .321 with 30 RBI over the second half of the year as he batted .304 during the regular season to earn second team All-SEC laurels.
- Gill enjoyed a pair of big days in SEC road games, collecting four RBI in wins at Alabama on March 29 and at Arkansas on May 16, with the win over the Razorbacks allowing LSU to clinch the SEC championship.



- Sophomore CF J.C. Holt didn't quite live up to the lofty standards set by his freshman All-America season in 2002, but the converted second baseman saved his best for the post-season. Holt was named the Most Outstanding Player of the Baton Rouge regional, batting .643 (9-for-14) with nine runs scored and eight RBI in three games.
- Holt's biggest day in an LSU uniform came in the regional opener vs. Northeastern on May 30, when he hit two home runs in a game for the first time in his career and finished the day 4-for-5 with 5 RBI, career highs for both hits and RBI. Holt was 3-for-5 with 3 RBI vs. Tulane and 2-for-5 vs. UNC Wilmington in the last two games of the regional.
- Holt did not commit an error in 106 chances in the outfield and led the Tigers in stolen bases with 16 steals in 18 attempts, including a career high three on February 8 vs. Northwestern St.
- Although he wasn't expected to start the full season, freshman catcher Matt Liuzza proved more than up to the challenge when Dustin Weaver went down for the season with a shoulder injury on March 11. Liuzza finished as the Tigers' leading hitter in the post-season, batting .381 (16-for-42) in 12 post-season games and .467 (14-for-30) in the NCAA tournament to finish the year batting .312.
- Liuzza didn't have a three-hit game until June, but collected a pair of big games when it counted. Liuzza had three-hit games in the first and third games of the super regional vs. Baylor, and was 8-for-15 in the three games vs. the Bears.
- Junior infielder Ivan Naccarata got off to a slow start at second base after transferring to LSU in January from Chipola Junior College in Florida, but his bat picked up with his move to third base. Naccarata enjoyed a 19-game hitting streak from February 11 through March 21, batting .387 during the streak, which was the longest in the SEC this year.
- Naccarata slumped in April, but he rebounded quite strongly with a .433 batting average during the month of May and a .324 mark during the NCAA Tournament.
- Naccarata was a unanimous selection to the Baton Rouge regional all-tournament team, going 8-for-15 during the three games, including a 4-for-5 outing vs. Tulane on May 31.
- Gaining valuable experience for the 2003 season was true freshman 1B Will Harris. Harris started several games early in the season before his older brother, Clay, took over full-time. Will Harris finished the season batting .233 in 26 games and went 2-for-5 with a two-run home run on March 22 at Georgia.
- Sophomore DH Quinn Stewart battled a nagging hamstring injury throughout the season and suffered a sprained ankle in warm ups prior to the first regional game, but the Texas native showed some flashes of potential, especially with his four RBI effort in the CWS vs. South Carolina. Stewart's best game came on February 14 vs. Kansas, when he hit a home run and doubled twice. Stewart started 37 games and batted .297 in 44 games overall.
- Sophomore LF Bruce Sprowl slumped a bit toward the end of the season, but for the vast majority of the regular season, he was a solid leadoff hitter for the Tigers, batting .304 during the regular season. Sprowl had six three-hit games during the season, including a 3-for-4 effort in the super regional finale vs. Baylor.
- Two players who began the 2003 season as starters, freshman SS Matt Horwath and redshirt sophomore catcher Dustin Weaver, succumbed to season ending injuries. Horwath was out for the season after the February 18 game vs. UL-Monroe with a rotator cuff injury in his right shoulder, while a chronic shoulder injury sidelined Weaver following the Tulane game at Zephyr Field on March 11.
- A third player who succumbed to injuries early in the season was senior 1B/DH Eric Wiethorn, who tore ligaments in his left knee during practice on February 19. Wiethorn was not eligible to apply for a medical redshirt and thus has completed his LSU eligibility.



Notes on Tiger pitchers:

- With Lane Metsepey, a first team All-SEC selection in both 2001 and 2002, lost for 2003 before the season even began, junior RHP Brian Wilson was expected to move into the lead role of the staff.
- Wilson went 5-2 through the first two weekends of SEC play, including a five-hit, complete game shutout of Florida in the conference opener on March 14, but after losing at Alabama on March 28, it was discovered Wilson had a torn ligament in his right elbow that would require season ending Tommy John surgery.
- Wilson, who won 10 games for LSU as a sophomore in 2002, finished 5-3 with a 3.38 ERA in his shortened season.
- With Wilson down, Nate Bumstead filled the ace role of the staff quite nicely. The junior right-hander from Las Vegas earned second team All-SEC honors by going 9-2 during the regular season with a 4.07 ERA, walking just 22 batters and striking out 70 in 79 2/3 innings.
- Bumstead was at his best against SEC competition, going 9-1 with a 3.61 ERA vs. conference foes after moving into the starting rotation on March 23 at Georgia. Bumstead tossed complete games vs. South Carolina on April 6 and Mississippi St. on May 23 in the SEC Tournament.
- Bumstead made his first starts of the year on an emergency basis when Bo Pettit went down with a case of the flu. Bumstead's first start was a winner, as he went seven innings and gave up just two runs against Northwestern St. on February 9.
- As for Pettit, the fifth-year senior closed his LSU career ranked ninth on the Tigers' list for wins (27) and strikeouts (300) after going 9-2 despite a 5.90 ERA.
- Pettit's best outing came in the Tigers' first SEC series, as he pitched a complete game in a 3-2 victory over Florida on March 15. Pettit then struck out 10 the next weekend at Georgia, but struggled throughout the rest of the season, as he posted a first inning ERA of 11.49, giving up 20 earned runs in 15 2/3 innings.
- Pettit missed his first two starts due to the flu, and his first game of the year resulted in a save when he pitched the final two innings vs. Houston on February 23.
- Another senior who had high hopes for 2003 was Jake Tompkins. The right-hander from California, who was a second team All-SEC reliever in 2002, struggled in his return to the rotation early in 2003, before going to the bullpen, where he continued to have trouble. Tompkins finished the year 3-5 with a 5.23 ERA.
- Tompkins struck out 11 in 5 2/3 innings in the season opener on February 7 vs. Northwestern St., but his first win would not come until April 15, when he pitched five shutout innings in an 8-0 win over Tulane at Baton Rouge. He also pitched seven solid innings in defeating Northeastern in the opener of the Baton Rouge regional on May 30.
- But more often than not, Tompkins had his trouble. He took the loss in relief on March 25 at New Orleans, and then struggled again in his return to the Big Easy, giving up six runs on eight hits in 3 2/3 innings against Tulane at the Superdome on April 29.
- Tompkins finished his LSU career with 171 strikeouts in 152 2/3 innings, or 10.08 per nine innings.
- The future of the Tigers lies in a pair of freshman All-Americans, starting with right-hander Justin Meier. Meier finished his first year at LSU with an 8-3 mark with a 2.81 ERA, earning him freshman All-America recognition from both Collegiate Baseball and Baseball America.
- Meier was a midweek starter for LSU through the first two months of the year, as he pitched five shutout innings as part of a combined shutout on February 11 at Centenary.
- Meier saw his first SEC action on March 16 vs. Florida, and two weeks later, notched his first



LSU save when he retired the final two batters at Alabama on March 30 with the bases loaded in a one-run game in the bottom of the ninth.

- Meier then moved into the SEC starting rotation when Brian Wilson was lost for the year, and immediately paid dividends, as he pitched a complete game against defending SEC champion South Carolina on April 4. Meier also enjoyed a strong outing at Arkansas on May 18 in the SEC finale, pitching eight shutout innings.
- The other strong outing turned in by a freshman hurler was that of Jason Determann. The south-paw from Baton Rouge saw his 2002 season cut short when he needed Tommy John surgery to repair a damaged ligament in his left elbow, but he came back strong, finishing 7-0 with a 2.94 ERA in 20 appearances.
- Determann fashioned the best control of all LSU pitchers, walking just 11 batters in 67 1/3 innings and allowing opponents to hit just .243 against him. His average of 1.13 baserunners per inning (hit batters, walks and hits allowed divided by innings pitched) was the lowest of an Tiger hurler.
- Determann was at his best in the post-season, going 3-0 in five appearances. Determann started and picked up the win in the SEC Tournament opener vs. Arkansas on May 22, then got wins in relief over UNC Wilmington on June 1 in the regional championship game and on June 7 vs. Baylor to keep LSU alive in the super regional.
- Determann saved one of his best outings for the final game of the season, as he pitched 6 2/3 innings of relief vs. South Carolina in the CWS on June 15.
- Another freshman with potential is left-hander Greg Smith. Smith, the 2002 high school player of the year in Louisiana, made immediate contributions to an injury depleted staff by appearing in 17 games, walking just seven batters in 33 2/3 innings. Smith was victimized at times by defensive lapses, as he yielded a staff high 11 unearned runs.
- The workhorse of the staff was junior right-hander Billy Sadler, who made 28 appearances, all but one in relief. Sadler was 1-2 with a 3.89 ERA but struggled with inconsistency.
- Sadler notched a team high four saves, but he blew his biggest save opportunity in the final game of the year, giving up the game winning run in the eighth inning vs. South Carolina in the CWS on June 15.
- The Tigers' projected closer for 2003, junior right-hander Brandon Nall, appeared in six games and notched a pair of saves before a torn labrum in his right shoulder ended his season after a March 2 appearance at Long Beach St. Nall, a submarine thrower, is expected to make a full recovery in time for 2004.
- Two other pitchers with promise, freshman left-hander Clay Dirks and junior right-hander Collin Smith, were both lost during fall practice with injuries that required surgery. Both are expected to be ready to contribute in 2004.

Looking ahead at 2004:

- LSU heads into its third year under coach Smoke Laval looking to replace All-American shortstop Hill, a first-round draft pick of the Toronto Blue Jays, but with all other position starters back. The Tigers will also get back a pair of early season starters, catcher Dustin Weaver and shortstop Matt Horwath, back from season ending shoulder injuries.
- The Tigers will return a pair of first team All-SEC performers in first baseman Clay Harris and designated hitter Ryan Patterson, along with second teamers in second baseman Blake Gill and right fielder Jon Zeringue. These returning all-starts, along with third baseman Ivan Naccarata, center fielder J.C. Holt and catcher Matt Liuzza, give the Tigers a very strong nucleus on which to build for the upcoming season.



- On the mound, reliever Billy Sadler will likely sign with the San Francisco Giants, while fifth-year senior Bo Pettit has exhausted his eligibility and will sign with Minnesota. The status of junior Brian Wilson, whose season ended on March 28 after undergoing Tommy John surgery, remains uncertain at press time.
- Three pitchers, two time All-SEC left-hander Lane Mestepey, along with southpaw Clay Dirks and right-hander Collin Smith, will return from injuries that sidelined them before the 2003 season even started. Add in returning starters Justin Meier and Nate Bumstead, along with key swingman Jason Determann, and the Tigers' rotation will be as strong as ever.
- The Tigers' schedule begins on February 13 with a three-game series at Central Florida, and includes weekend series with Jacksonville St., Houston and in-state rival Southeastern Louisiana before the 30-game SEC slate starts on March 19 at South Carolina.
- The Tigers' SEC slate undergoes an alteration for 2004, as Kentucky returns to the schedule after a two-year hiatus and Florida drops off, the first time the Tigers and the Gators will not meet since 1995. LSU hosts Mississippi St., Arkansas, Georgia, Alabama and Vanderbilt while going to South Carolina, Auburn, Tennessee, Kentucky and Ole Miss.



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