

## **SPLINTERS FROM THE PRESSBOX - Paul Fullmer '55**

### **Diggins And McGraw's Lady Irish Have High Hopes**

Muffet McGraw wants it all again. After a bitter loss in the NCAA finals last year, McGraw would like to bring home the trophy this year. And, she's got a veteran team that Sports Illustrated ranks #2 in the country.

All-American candidate Skylar Diggins, a South Bend product, is focused on bringing the National Championship back home again to Indiana and enjoying a victory parade with family and friends.

Although she was only 10 when McGraw, Ruth Riley and teammates won ND's only National Basketball title, Diggins vividly remembers the celebration and wants to do it all over again.

McGraw has six of the top seven scorers back from the team that lost in the finals to Texas A&M last year. The coach and players still haven't recovered from blowing a seven point second half lead against the Aggies.

Diggins, the 5-9 junior from Washington High School, already is on most pre-season All-American teams and she will have great support from senior guard Natalie Novosel, who led the team in scoring last year, and two fifth-year seniors – forward Devereux Peters and guard Brittany Mallory.

The brilliant final run last year fueled Diggins' confidence – averaging 19.3 points in NCAA competition (up from 14.2 during the regular season) – and winning a gold medal at the World University Games. What really was impressive was her 28 points in the semi-final upset of Connecticut when she out-gunned Player-of-the-Year Maya Moore.

"I've never thought I had the best athletic ability on the court; I just think I'm the most crafty," Diggins told Sports Illustrated. "I try to make players around me better. I just believe any team that I'm on should win."

Niele Ivey, a member of the 2001 championship Team and now an assistant to McGraw, spends most of her time mentoring the pre-season Big East Player-of-the-Year.

"Watching her will shots in, her creative energy and the way she led us, I said, wow, she's arrived," Ivey said after Diggins' monster game against UConn.

McGraw will unveil some new faces this year – sharp shooter Kayla McBride and freshman forward Markisha Wright.

McGraw has her sights on returning to the NCAA title game and bringing back the championship trophy to Notre Dame.

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