It was a very emotional weekend for the Notre Dame women, who exited the DII National Championship weekend with a Final Four bid.

"I have never been more proud of a group of people in my entire life," Notre Dame's Christina Konkey said. "My teammates are such a source of inspiration to me. They are all intelligent and naturally gifted athletes. T heir dedication to the game and our team has motivated me to be a better player, but more importantly they have motivated me to be a harder worker. I would do anything to play another game with these girls, and I am clearly not the only one; that desire to play one more weekend together was the driver of our success this weekend in San Diego."

Notre Dame played its first competitive season last fall and finished second behind UW La Crosse at the Midwest Championship. The top seed bowed out in the first round of nationals, as did Midwest #3 seed Winona State, and the Fighting Irish did well to represent their territory into the later rounds. It began with a Round of 16 win against another first-year team, Mesa State out of Colorado, a game that ended in a 27-20 win. The team followed with a surprising 23-15 win against Shippensburg in the quarterfinals.

Notre Dame was down at the half in both games, and had to dig deep to engineer comebacks. "Mesa State certainly had the size advantage," Konkey recalled, "so we made up our minds to attack hard. Once we gained the advantage, we did not give up field position."

Tries from Kayla Bishop, Ashley Okonta and Margot DeBot held the cause, and game-sealing penalty kicks (2) and a conversion from Megan Scheitlin took care of the rest.

"Shippensburg was a challenge for us, but we really concentrated on executing our basic skills and smart decision-making," the two-time try scorer said. "We played our game with a lot of heart." Okonta added her second of try of the weekend, and Scheitlin nailed another eight points on two penalties and a conversion.

"Both games were very physical and the teams put up a great fight," Konkey said. "At the end of the day, our mental tenacity and sheer determination won us the matches. We made the decision that this weekend would not be the last that we played together."

Another huge drive to the team's success was the leadership of new coach and Eagle Kate Daley. "I cannot imagine anyone but our coach taking us this far, especially in our first season," Konkey said. "She is an amazing coach and I can assure you that we have counted our blessings a million times over in having her direct our team. She kept us uplifted and focused."

Notre Dame also has a great support system in assistant coaches Ricardo Ramirez and Dan Tuisaula, as well as the Notre Dame Men's team, especially coach Sean O'Leary.

Notre Dame seems to have to the "heart" aspect covered, but they'll need to be spot-on technically as they prepare for Stonehill College in the final four. Regardless, the trip to Pittsburgh is a tremendous first step for this young club, and it has nothing to lose heading into the semifinals.