Senior Scott Martin steps into leadership role, guides team into Big East tournament
Brey ranks as one of regular season’s best

Mike Brey did not make it four of six Big East Coach of the Year awards Tuesday night. Instead, this year’s honor went to South Florida’s Stan Heath. By no means was Heath undeserving — Brey voted for him after all. But the award should have belonged to Brey.

Of all the criticism the Irish coach has faced in his 12 years under the Dome, one thing can no longer be said: Brey is not one of the best regular season coaches in the country.

Is this back-handed compliment? Perhaps. But isn’t a back-handed compliment better than no compliment at all? Could this back-handed compliment prove true in the years past? Quite possibly, but this year eliminated any shred of doubt, even the harshest of critics.

Is this description Brey worthy of it? Doubtful, but this usually precedes a pollster accolade.

Notre Dame begins play in the Big East championships two years later than teams such as Pittsburgh and Connecticut because Brey’s engineering avoided a down-year similar to the ones which struck the defending conference and national champions, respectively. Perhaps he wished for a Jamie Dixon and Connecticut’s Jim Calhoun joined the other coaches in the Big East in predicting Notre Dame finish in ninth in the conference pre-season poll.

Such a finish would have the Irish sweating come season disappear. Except no one told Mike Brey. The Irish went on to defeat Pitt and Connecticut (twice), and beat them too, and for good measure, added six more conference wins to the streak. For a few brief moments, one Wednesday night, it looked as if a Big East regular season title was within grasp. Alas, Syracuse beat South Florida on Feb. 22, and kept on winning, but Notre Dame still has a chance to take its third-place finish. Yes, that is six spots better than Abromaitis-led squad was predicted to finish. As he so close [to the title game] last year and it still stings a little bit,” senior guard Scott Martin said. “We still have that in our memory, so hopefully we can build on that.”

The Irish (21-10, 13-5 Big East) struggled to find a rhythm in the early part of the season. They were highlighted by a 29-point loss to Missouri and a 20-point loss at Gonzaga at the end of November. After muddling through the early part of the conference slate, Notre Dame found its stride at the end of January when it upset then-No. 1 Syracuse 67-58 to kick off a nine-game winning streak, the longest league winning streak in program history. Now, Irish coach Mike Brey wants his squad to return to the mental- ity that helped his team hand the Orange their only loss of the season.

"You’re kind of trying to get back into a frame of mind that you were in before the Syra- cuse game," he said. "Can you get back into that kind of prac- tice routine ... and that kind of psyche where man, you really needed each other? That’s the kind of mentality we have to have.

The late-season surge was enough to earn the Irish a No. 3 seed and double-bye in the tournament, just two wins away from the title. Notre Dame has never appeared in the Big East tournament this year, which traditionally has taken place on Saturday night. ("Getting to Saturday night is something that’s been a goal for us," Martin said. "Most of the year, we’ve talked about it as one of our points of empha- sis this year, just trying to get there.

In the quarterfinals, the Irish will face the winner of the South Florida-Villanova game, which took place after this Irish Insider went to press. The Irish beat the Bulls 66-49 in their only meeting this year, a Jan. 10 meeting in Purcell Pavilion. Despite his team’s familiarity with the South Florida squad, Martin said the Irish are well aware of the challenge the Bulls would pose.

“They’re big and they rebound well, which is some- thing we kind of struggle on at times,” Martin said. “But we’re just excited to get out there and get to work and get kind of a routine before we play Thursday.”

Notre Dame won a 74-70 overtime thriller at Villanova on Feb. 18, a victory marked by a late comeback to earn the seventh of nine consecutive league wins.

No matter the opponent, the venue might be the single big- gest challenge the Irish face. The Irish are 55-45 all-time in Madison Square Garden, but lost their only contest there this year and have notoriously struggled to shoot accurately in the famously round arena, especially in the Big East tournament, where the Irish are 8-16 all time.

Brey said that his team has struggled there in the past, last year’s quarterfinal game showed Notre Dame is capable of success in the Garden.

“You’ve got to get past that psychologically,” he said. “We were in a good rhythm last year ... maybe that’s what I’ll talk to [my team] about.”

Martin said he and his teammates will try do exact- ly what their coach has told them to do.

“There’s always in the back of your head that we’ve dropped some games there and haven’t shot the ball par- ticularly well,” Martin said. “It’s still a basketball court. We try to enjoy it and relish the moment, but try to get some wins too.”

Contact Allan Joseph at ajoseph@nd.edu

Douglas Farmer
Senior Sports Writer

Irish head to NYC for tourney

By ALLAN JOSEPH
Edwin-a-Chief

A year ago, an Irish squad that lost two senior leaders to graduation surprised many in the Big East by earning a 14-4 league record on route to a No. 2 seed in the confer- ence tournament, where they were defeated in the semi- finals by Louisville. This year, a Notre Dame team that lost veteran leaders to graduation, injury and early departure again exceeded expectations by earning a No. 3 seed in the post-season tournament — but this year, the Irish hope to go farther.

The Irish (21-10, 13-5 Big East) struggled to find a rhythm in the early part of the season. They were highlighted by a 29-point loss to Missouri and a 20-point loss at Gonzaga at the end of November. After muddling through the early part of the conference slate, Notre Dame found its stride at the end of January when it upset then-No. 1 Syracuse 67-58 to kick off a nine-game winning streak, the longest league winning streak in program history. Now, Irish coach Mike Brey wants his squad to return to the mental- ity that helped his team hand the Orange their only loss of the season.

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Contact Allan Joseph at ajoseph@nd.edu

Douglas Farmer
Senior Sports Writer

Irish sophomore Eric Atkins attempts to finish a layup in front of a Marquette defender during Notre Dame’s 76-59 win Feb. 4. The Irish and Eagles could meet again in the Big East semifinals.
Captain comeback

By ERIC PRISTER
Senior Sports Writer

Thursday, March 8, 2012

The Irish started the season short on leadership with just two senior returning starters. But when fifth-year forward Tim Abromaitis went down with an ACL tear, senior guard Scott Martin had to start taking charge — and taking charges.

I think I had to be even more vocal when [Abromaitis] went down because you lose that voice on the floor,” Martin said, “He was so big for us in every aspect of the game that there’s a lot of open air out there, and I felt like I had to pick up the slack a little bit.”

Abromaitis entered the season as the de facto leader of this year’s Notre Dame squad after averaging 15 points and six rebounds per game in 2010-11. But he missed the first four games of the regular season because of an eligible- ity violation during his redshirted second season with the Irish. He left without ever returning for games.

Abromaitis tore his ACL in practice, ending his season.

M artin was forced to pick up the slack and became the lone Irish captain before sophomore guard Eric Atkins was given the honor midway through the season. And while Martin ranks just fourth on the team in points per game and third on the team in rebounds per game, Irish coach Mike Brey said he cringes every time he has to take the captain off the floor.

“He has a really amazing basketball IQ,” Brey said. “He really knows the game. If there’s a smarter basketball player in the country, I want to see it. I really value that. He has great input here in practice, in scouting reports, brings up questions. He’s really helped our younger guys’ basketball IQ. [Junior forward and All-Big East second-team selection forward] Jack Cooley’s [success] this year has a lot to do with Scott Martin being his partner on the back line and talking to him and getting him confident and helping him. He’s a big, big factor.”

But Martin is not just a vocal leader. He regularly guards the opponent’s best big man and unofficially leads the nation in charges taken.

“I don’t really think about it too much,” Martin said of taking charges. “You just try to make the right play at the right time, and if I feel like I can get one, I try and get one. I just try not to move and hope for the call.”

“We work on it in prac- tice. Coach is always talking about trying to get charges and being in the right place, so it’s definitely something we work on. But you have to have a feel for it, and I think that just comes with me being old.”

Martin’s career at Notre Dame was rocky from the outset. The 6-foot-8 guard from Valparaiso, Ind., transferred from Purdue after his freshman season. Martin was surrounded by inexperience — Notre Dame’s four other starters averaged just 36 minutes per game among them. But for new starters like freshman guard Pat Connaughton, Martin was just the type of leader they needed.

“The energy he brings and his desire to win has sparked me because I’m the same way: I want to win, whatever it takes, and that’s what he wants to do,” Connaughton said. “I know he’s been that guy, the one who’s really helped us get over the hump, especially in the tough times. Even if he was having hard times, he was helping us help the team. Him and [Abromai- tis] both, just being the fifth-year seniors, even though [Abromaitis] can’t play, have really helped us skyrocket into the team we are now. He took on the role better than he would have if [Abromaitis] was playing.”

Martin said that for the younger players, he had to be a more vocal leader and give more instruction to his teammates.

“It’s an overall mentality that I try to have,” he said. “You try to keep everybody in the right spots and the right places, but I think a lot of it is vocally just yelling at guys, telling them, ‘Get here and get there.’ And then calming them down when things need to be calmed down.”

Martin and the Irish turned their season around, but now have more to prove in the Big East tournament. Last season, Martin excelled in Madison Square Garden, scoring 11 points in Notre Dame’s quarterfinals win over Cincinnati and then exploding with 23 points and eight rebounds in its semifinals loss to Louisi- nesville. As this year’s tournament approaches, Martin said he just hopes he can channel some of that success.

“Try to ride any posi- tive momentum you’ve got, so hopefully I can use it for momentum and replicate it,” he said.

Contact Eric Prister at epister@nd.edu
A steady and lanky sophomore, Grant has been a valuable scorer after not playing last season. The Bowie, Md., native earned a spot on the All-Big East rookie team after a year in which he scored in double figures in 24 of Notre Dame’s 33 games. Grace’s smooth 3-point shot and desire to take the last-second shot could be critical for the Irish.

No. 14 Scott Martin

A 6’8” forward, Martin has been the go-to scorer for the Irish all season long, starting every game he has played in. The Valparaiso, Ind., native and Purdue transfer is not flashy by any means but can fill up the stat sheet in a variety of ways. The trinity captain has also provided invaluable leadership off the court.

No. 12 Alex Dragicevich

A long and rangy sophomore, Dragicevich has slipped into a sixth man role for the Irish during the season. The Arlington, Ill., native will rely on his 3-point shot as he battles Conventional for playing time in the postseason. Dragicevich’s double doubles in the season finale for the first time since December.

No. 0 Eric Atkins

It has been a magical season for Notre Dame in a completely different way than it was last year. Last year, five senior starters came together, nearly won the Big East and earned a No. 2 seed in the NCAA tournament. This year, one senior starter and a multitude of new faces fought through early-season struggles and did something no Notre Dame team had ever done before, winning nine straight conference games.

No. 15 Jerian Grant

The postseason will not be as kind to the Irish and get-together court. It’s one of those things that makes no sense, but is fact nonetheless. Notre Dame is no good in Madison Square Garden. Maybe it’s the bright lights, maybe it’s the perfect circularity of the arena or maybe it’s the gigantic Reese’s billboard underneath the scoreboard. Whatever it is, the Irish always struggle in the Garden.

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A steady and lanky sophomore, Grant has been a valuable scorer after not playing last season. The Bowie, Md., native earned a spot on the All-Big East rookie team after a year in which he scored in double figures in 24 of Notre Dame’s 33 games. Grace’s smooth 3-point shot and desire to take the last-second shot could be critical for the Irish.
Andrew Owens
Associate Sports Editor

Once again, Notre Dame enters the Big East tournament with high expectations. Once again, Notre Dame faces questions about its util-
ity in the Big East tournament and at Madison Square Garden in general. What better way for the Irish to celebrate the last year of the Big East than to knock out their demons and make it to the Saturday final for the first time ever?

Unfortunately for Irish coach Mike Brey’s squad, I don’t think it happening. Despite being the beneficiaries of the easiest path possible to the championship game, I expect Marquette to exact revenge against Notre Dame in the semifinals.

With two or three wins this week, the Irish can transform a memorable season into a magical one. But the Rutgers season has a few bright spots: big wins over then-No. 10 Florida and then-No. 8 Connecticut in late-December/early January. Freshman guard D.J. Carter’s 13-point performance in the game leads the agile four-guard Rutgers offense, which gave the Irish all they could handle in the teams’ first meeting.

Matthew DeFranks
Sports Writer

The Irish, who have overcome ob-
stacle after obstacle, feel like a team of destiny. Lose the reigning Big East Player of the Year? No problem. Lose your senior captain and best player to a season-ending injury? No prob-
lem. Lose road games by 20 points? Not an issue, either.

But I don’t think all the intangibles are enough to bring home Notre Dame’s first Big East championship. I do think the Irish overcome their shooting woes in Madison Square Garden and slip by Marquette in the semifinals. But I don’t see them taking a conference title from a deep Syracuse team that will have stalwart center Fab Melo this time.

Think Jim Boeheim’s hasn’t shown footage of the Orange’s only loss of the year over and over and over again? Think again.

Andrew Gastelum
Sports Writer

The Irish were not supposed to get a double-bye. They weren’t supposed to go on a nine-game winning streak. They weren’t even supposed to be con-
sidered for the NCAA tournament.

But something tells me this Irish team has peaked and it isn’t entering the Big East tournament on the best of terms with two losses and an unim-
pressive Senior Night win.

Meanwhile, No. 9 Marquette looks poised to win its first Big East title. With All-Big East first team seniors Darius Johnson-Odom and Jae Crowder, this may be the only shot Golden Eagles remember how it felt to be blown out on national television by the Irish. But if the Irish can knock down shots at a decent rate, watch out. They aren’t supposed to win, but that hasn’t stopped them this season.

Thursday, March 8, 2012
ndsmeobserver.com | page 5
Cooley develops into Big-East selection

By ANDREW OWENS

Jack Cooley lives life in a ho- 

rizontal, adhering to a simple system and routine rather than spontane-

ity, so the way he found out he was named the conference’s Most Im-

proved Player on March 1 was bizarre. The call from Notre Dame coach Mike Brey rang into the junior center’s i- 

phony 12:15 p.m. and didn’t have any texts, but my best friend texted me ‘congrats’ (at 12:20) and I was embarrassed and asked: ‘For what?’

“I’m … disappointed in my team, because I found out from my best friend … because I don’t check Twitter or Facebook,” the junior forward said. “I woke up at 12:15 (p.m.) and didn’t have any texts, but my best friend texted me ‘congrats’ (at 12:20) and I was embarrassed and asked: ‘For what?’

Now in his third year at Notre Dame, Cooley has transformed himself from a Lake Harney- 

good high school player into one of the best players in what is typically regarded as the nation’s top conference.

“I’m really proud of Jack,” Irish coach Mike Brey said. “He cer- 

tainly was probably a candidate for the team, but I’m kind of happy he isn’t first team. He still needs to have things to shoot for. But from where he came from in the fall to being a second-team guy, I’m very, very proud of him and I know he’s proud of himself and he’s earned it.

During the regular season, Cooley averaged 12.5 points per game and 9.2 rebounds per game, numbers that reached 14.6 and 10.2, respectively, in Big East play. What is most remark-

able, however, is that he was even in a position to hang with the big boys of the Big East.

Last summer, Cooley was diag-

nosed with a condition that lim-

its his blood from processing and delivering oxygen, raising doubts about his endurance and ability to play extended minutes. He an-

swered that challenge by start-

ning in 28 of 30 games in which he played and registered 32.7 minutes per game in conference play. He even factored in high- 

44 minutes in the double 

time overtime victory over Louisville on Jan. 7.

When his condition was an-

ounced in November and Notre 

Dame suffered several embar-

rassing non-conference defeats, it was borderline unfathomable that Cooley could wind up on the Big East’s second team and be 

named the conference’s Most Im-

proved Player. The only person who called the season, however, was then second-team hon- 

ors Sunday should surprise no one.

“For what?” the senior guard Eric Atkins said. “I think they just make us that much tougher to guard.”

Cooley has shot well from behind the arc this sea- 

son, knocking down 34 percent of his 3-pointers. Brey said he credits Irish assistant coach Martin Ingelsby with Dragicevich’s improvement from a year ago, when he averaged just 1.4 points per game.

“I think Alex’s frame of mind is good,” Brey said. “What I need to do is get Pat prepared. We focused so much on getting 

dragging our bench, Connaughton, Dragicevich and the rest of the Irish will look to capture the school’s first Big East title and perhaps feel a little bit like a No. 1 seed in the Big East tournament this season.

“Tired of telling him [not to overthink plays],” Brey said. “I think they just make us that much tougher to guard.”

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Brey also said the coaching staff must use a different ap-

proach with Dragicevich.

“I’m tired of telling him [not to overthink plays],” Brey said. “I think Alex’s frame of mind is good,” Brey said. “I think we’ll stay with what we have,” Brey said. “My gut tells me I’m thinking through the weekend, that we stay the course and get Pat going and bring Alex off the bench.”

Connaughton, Dragicevich and the rest of the Irish will look to capture the school’s first Big East title and perhaps feel a little bit like a No. 1 seed in the Big East tournament this season.
Atkins, Grant compliment each other in Irish backcourt

By ANDREW GASTELUM
Sports Writer

Opposites somehow attract. Welcome to the Notre Dame backcourt, where confident meets bashful and intense fuses with reserved. But sophomore guards Jerian Grant and Eric Atkins are united by the game, a game once started on D.C.-area playgrounds, which now magically finds itself heading north to Madison Square Garden.

“The big hype about the Garden is before the game, but during the game once started on D.C.-area club teams in high school. The B-W Parkway guards face off in an AAU championship, which was kind of a big deal. While Grant wants the ball in his hands for the final shot, Atkins will assuredly make the stellar pass to his roommate (see the final minutes against Villanova). Atkins has seen an enormous jump in his production, which includes coming from the same place and being from the same area as well helps us while we are on the court. It's really nice to have.”

Contact Andrew Gastelum at agastel1@nd.edu

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"Mention this ad!"

Irish sophomore guard Eric Atkins attempts a layup during Notre Dame’s 75-69 win over Providence on March 2.

SARAH O’CONNOR/The Observer

Endless 5'8" Jerian.

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"Mention this ad!"

Irish sophomore guard Eric Atkins attempts a layup during Notre Dame’s 84-76 over DePaul on Feb. 11.
SUMMER SESSION 2012

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Meet some of our instructors and learn what Notre Dame offers in the summer.

Summer Session Fair | Tuesday, April 3 | Noon–4:00 p.m.
La Fortune Student Center | Notre Dame Room

J. Matthew Ashley
Prof. Ashley’s scholarly interests include political and liberation theology, Christian spirituality, and the dialogue between theology and science.

THED 60240: Contemplation and Action (CRN 4087)
July 9–July 27 What is the relationship between contemplative prayer and action on behalf of others? Explore the creative ways that Christian spiritual masters through the centuries have avoided dividing, or even opposing, these two essential elements of a full Christian life.

Nasir Ghiaseddin
Prof. Ghiaseddin’s expertise is in the areas of Management Information Systems, Decision Support Systems, Pattern Recognition, and Expert Systems.

MGT 20600: IT Management Applications (CRN 3104)
June 18–August 3 Students will attain a general understanding of opportunities and challenges in IT Management. This will be achieved through online research and discussion of IT Management issues and business process as well as hands-on use of common IT application tools.

Dan Graff
Prof. Graff teaches American history, in particular, courses focusing on the histories of labor, race, gender, and politics.

HIST 30856: Working in America since 1945 (CRN 4154)
June 18–August 3 Students will be introduced to how the world of work (both paid and unpaid) has changed dramatically in the decades since World War II. Since work occupies most of our waking hours as adults, we all have much to gain from learning about the evolution of the employment relationship over the past half-century.

Susan Sheridan
Prof. Sheridan is a specialist in biological anthropology. Her research interests include analysis of ancient diet and disease.

ANTH 45818/65818: NSF-REU Biocultural Research Program (CRN 2546/2547)
May 28–July 17 Experience this hands-on research course, which will engage students in an experiential learning environment that immerses them in anthropological method and theory. An application for this course is required. For information visit http://www.nd.edu/~nsfBone/nsf/sbones/Home.html.

For a list of social events and day trips organized by the Student Activities Office, visit sao.nd.edu.