

## Brey Ready For 'Circus'

Written by Sean Stires

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NOTRE DAME, Ind. - It may not be Ringling Brothers and Barnham & Bailey, but college basketball's own version of "the circus" is coming to Notre Dame this weekend. That is how Fighting Irish head coach Mike Brey described the invasion that will take place throughout Saturday prior to the 9 p.m. tip-off between Notre Dame and Louisville.

Brey's version of "the circus" is ESPN's College GameDay show, which will air at 10 a.m. ET on ESPNU, continue at 11 a.m. on ESPN and then air again for an hour beginning at 8 p.m. prior to Saturday's prime time game.

"The circus is coming to town, and I've got my cotton candy," Brey proclaimed when asked how he will deal with the added spotlight and potential distractions the national broadcasts will provide. "I am gonna have fun. We are gonna enjoy it. I'm gonna be with the students, and someone said there's a game in there at 9:00 o'clock...I'll get to that later."

Brey's Irish were riding a 45-game home court winning streak the last time GameDay showed its head on campus on Jan. 24, 2009. Notre Dame lost 69-61 that day to Connecticut.

"I think my mental preparation for that, given the 45-game win streak, (and) the whole thing coming to town, I don't think I did a good job with my team," Brey said of his last GameDay experience. "They probably were uptight because of me."

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"When you don't have that on your back it's easier to enjoy the cotton candy when you're sitting at the circus," Brey continued. "Because the circus is coming to town today. There's more stuff going on. Amen, we're gonna have fun with it."

The GameDay includes former Notre Dame basketball coach Digger Phelps as well as fellow analysts Jay Bilas and Jalen Rose and host Rece Davis. Brey says his team will participate in Saturday mornings show and then leave Purcell Pavilion to rest before returning for a 4 p.m. team shoot around on its home court.

### **Staying Put...For Now**

The recent crumbling of the Big East Conference combined with Notre Dame's fall announcement that it is heading to the ACC made give rise to the chance the Irish could be headed to the ACC for the 2013-2014 season. That will not happen though. Brey confirmed on Thursday that the Irish will stay in the Big East for one more season.

"We will play in the Big East next year," Brey said. "And you know what, I'm ok with that. I've had a little buyer's remorse on this ACC and going through the league and playing in these different buildings and wondering if it's going to be the last (time)."

The seven Catholic schools that do not play FBS football - Marquette, Georgetown, St. John's, Villanova, Providence, Seton Hall, and DePaul - are all set to form their own conference soon, but Brey says part of the reason Notre Dame will stay in the Big East one more year is to allow those schools more time to get things together.

"I think we feel that they're gonna be in there (and) we're gonna be in there," Brey said. "So, the last hurrah's gonna be next year, not this year."

B1G opponents Indiana and Ohio State are both slated to be on Notre Dame's non-conference schedule next season. The Irish will face the Hoosiers in Indianapolis in the Crossroads Classic,

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while they will meet the Buckeyes in Madison Square Garden in the Gotham Classic. Santa Clara is also scheduled to visit South Bend. Since he now knows for sure he will stay put for another year, Brey says he can also now begin to schedule other non-league games.

## **Martin On The Mend?**

Scott Martin has missed Notre Dame's last four games as he tries to recover from a recurring knee injury. The graduate student's last game action was back on Jan. 21 in a 63-47 home loss to Georgetown. Martin has been on the Irish bench in street clothes in the four games since then, and he will begin shooting a little bit over the next couple days to see how he feels.

"I certainly don't want to rush him back," Brey said of Martin's possible return to action. "I'd like that thing to be really calmed down before we bring him back, and I think we're still in limbo, because if he goes hard on it for two days are we right back where we started from?"

Martin averaged 7.9 points and 5.9 rebounds while playing in 18 games this season. His production dropped off considerably in his last four games prior to Brey's decision to rest the veteran.

"I'm interested to see how he moves just in some shooting drills today (Thursday) and how he feels tomorrow," Brey continued. "That's as far as we can go right now and that's kind of the mindset with it."

The Irish do not play again until next Wednesday (Feb. 13) after Saturday's game, but then play three games in a five-day span beginning with that Wednesday night home game against DePaul.

## **It's Auguste**

Other than Tom Knight, who has started the last four games in Martin's absence, the player who

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has seen the biggest increase in playing time over the last four games is Zach Auguste. The 6'10" freshman has scored just a total of 10 points off the bench over the last three games, but he has given his team good energy in appearances he was not seeing earlier this season.

"He's given us great juice and energy," Brey said of Auguste. "But what he needs to help us with now is on the defensive boards. I told him on Tuesday (when) we watched some film - he's played 33 minutes without a defensive rebound."

Auguste played a season-high 14 minutes in last weekend's overtime win over DePaul. He was 3-for-4 from the floor in that game with six points and two rebounds.

"He's running the floor, he's had put backs (and) he's scored for us," Brey continued of the Marlborough, Mass product. "There's juice there, but he needs to help us on the defensive backboard down there. Having said that, I like what he's giving us right now. He has been another injection of energy for us."