Mike Brey has never spent more time recruiting a player than the Notre Dame men's basketball coach spent recruiting Demetrius Jackson, that's how important the local point guard was to the Irish's 2013 recruiting haul.

"He was on the radar a long time," Brey said of the 6-foot-2 guard from nearby Mishawaka, Ind.

"That was a key one for us. A lot of work went into that one. We're thrilled to have him, thrilled that he decided to stay home. I always felt we were in pretty darn good position with him. We maintained a great patience with him through the process. I think he's going to give us a great shot in the arm, certainly in this community with what he brings."

Brey pitched Jackson on the opportunity to do for the men's program what South Bend native Skylar Diggins has done for Muffet McGraw's women's squad. And it wasn't just Brey selling that idea.

"I talked to Muffet a lot and certainly Skylar was helpful," Brey said. "Skylar and her father have known him since he was a young guy running around the King Center. Between my assistants talking to their assistants, we went up one side and down another. I wish I had a nickel for every person in town that said, 'You should really have him talk to Skylar.'"

But in the end, it was the relationships Jackson formed with Brey and his staff that helped him feel comfortable enough to stay home and those relationships can only be built over time.

“(Irish assistant) Anthony Solomon did a good job getting the thing started,” said Brey. “I remember going to watch him as a ninth-grader over at Marian.

“I remember walking out going, ‘He’s just kind of an athlete playing basketball.’ The jump he made between 10th and 11th grade was amazing to me with feel for the game and the stroke. All because he worked at it.”

That work will give Jackson the chance to get on the floor early and the opportunity for Brey to have a seamless transition from point guard Eric Atkins, who will be in his final year of eligibility when Jackson arrives.

“Demetrius is a very ready guy right away as a freshman,” said Brey. “It’s been so interesting to watch him come as an athlete, just an athlete playing basketball, as a ninth and probably 10th-grader to becoming a guard; a good decision-maker with the ball.

“I’m amazed with what he’s done with his jump shot and his stroke, he is a shooter now. And you know what I love about him? He just loves to work on his game. He’s always after us, ‘Can you send me what you’re doing with your guards? Send me your workout.’ If I do catch him, he’s either going to a workout or he’s coming back from one.”

Brey said his staff was both relieved and excited when Jackson made his announcement that he was choosing Notre Dame over offers from schools like Illinois, Kansas, Michigan State and others.

“We haven’t had a local guy in 30-something years and to have one right here who is this talented, it’s just a great story,” he said. “It’s going to be a great Notre Dame story. I love the fact that he’s a gym rat. He just wants to work on his game and get better. He’s got to learn stuff, some guard stuff and I know he feels we can really help him with that.

“I’m very excited and looking forward to coaching him and what he’ll bring to our program.”