



## Mizzou muzzles Notre Dame

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KANSAS CITY • By the time No. 21 Mizzou's 87-58 dismantling of Notre Dame was complete Monday night at the Sprint Center, Fighting Irish coach Mike Brey seemed awestruck and was grasping for points of consolation.

"Flat-out men against boys; that was the varsity playing the JV," he said. "I'm glad they're not in our league. ... I don't want to see them again. They're very difficult to deal with."

In the CBE Classic semifinal, MU in the first half made 19 of 30 (63.3 percent) field goals and forced 10 Notre Dame turnovers to take a 52-37 lead.

Then the Tigers muzzled ND in the second half by outrebounding it 24-12 and holding the Irish to 25 percent shooting.

The Tigers (4-0) will play the winner of the Monday night late game between California and Georgia in the CBE title game at about 9 tonight.

Marcus Denmon led MU with 26 points, Phil Pressey had 17, Ricardo Ratliffe 12 and Kim English 10.

Denmon made nine of 11 field goals and was the hometown favorite, but first-year coach Frank Haith also gushed about English, who had six rebounds, four assists, two blocked shots, two steals and eight deflections.

English, a guard, has essentially become a 6-foot-6 forward, part of what's making Mizzou's "four-guard" setup seems like a strategic advantage instead of a response to injury.

MU's quickness, the strength of its guards and ability to play together, Brey said, mean that "being small never really hurts them."

Brey also praised Haith for being able to tweak but "not over-coaching" a team he took over that had enjoyed success in a different system.

"I think that's really a masterstroke," Brey said.

Haith noted it was only one game but conceded, "We played great tonight."

Or as Denmon put it: "I'm excited about what we have."

Notre Dame (4-1) isn't quite the team it was a year ago, with three key starters gone from a team whose 27 wins were its most since 1908-09. Brey said he saw a "glazed" look on some of his younger players.

But the Irish play in the Big East, have been a strong program under Brey and offered a different caliber of competition than MU saw in its first three nonconference games against Southeast Missouri State, Mercer and Niagara.

And MU made Notre Dame literally look defenseless.

MU's start was keyed by forward Ratliffe making his presence known early, hitting his first four shots.

The last was on an alert pass by English, who appeared to be going up for a 3-pointer.

That was the start of a 9-0 run for the Tigers, and they extended their lead to 25-12 on a Denmon free throw, his seventh point in a row for MU.

The Tigers, who go only eight deep, stayed in control despite foul trouble, with starters Ratliffe, Denmon and Matt Pressey each nabbed twice less than nine minutes in.

The Irish cut MU's lead to 37-29 on a three-point play by Tim Abromaitis, who had 18 points in his first half of the season after serving a four-game suspension.

But that was offset on a deflection by Mizzou's Steve Moore that led to a three-point play by Denmon, and the Tigers came back even more resoundingly after ND cut it to 42-35 on an Abromaitis layup.

Two Denmon free throws triggered a 10-0 run, and MU went into intermission leading 52-37 and roaring into the tunnel. They soared coming back out, scoring the first six points of the half and completing a 9-2 burst with a Denmon 3 that made it 61-49.

"I try to shoot shots that I know are going to go in," Denmon said.

Denmon laughed as he said that, but Brey made the point in a different way.

"He lets the game come to him," he said.

Just like Mizzou brought the game to Notre Dame.