

SPORTS

THE DAILY ILLINI

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Tuesday's results

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FOOD & PS

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For most people, eating is a pleasure — although sometimes a guilty one. For Illinois sophomore Mike Tisdale, eating is a full-time job. The 7-foot-1 center's day is filled with consuming as much as he can.

In the morning, Tisdale makes a big breakfast before heading to morning workouts. After workouts, he gulps down "a few" protein shakes before going home to eat a few platefuls of lunch. He'll usually grab a pre-class snack and something again between and after classes.

After class, Tisdale heads to Ubben Basketball Facility for a couple hours' break from the seemingly never-ending buffet line of his life.

The Riverton, Ill., native will eat a couple more platefuls for dinner and chug it down with a couple protein shakes or a 1,500-calorie weight gainer shake. Before he hits the bed, he makes sure to eat another snack and another shake.

It all amounts to about 6,000 calories a day, three times the recommended daily total for the average person. This has been Tisdale's daily routine for a year in an attempt to add weight to his lanky frame.

"I've always been the tall, skinny kid and never been able to gain weight. I mean I'd eat everything and other people's food and not be able to gain weight."

MIKE TISDALE,
Illinois center

"After you get done eating you're sweating," Tisdale said. "It's not as easy as people think it is because eating that much, you're full all day and feel sluggish sometimes."

Tisdale arrived on campus looking like a walking skeleton with only 200 pounds to fill his 7-foot-1 body. Illinois coach Bruce Weber realized his newest center would need to gain weight to compete with the big bodies of the Big Ten, but he was surprised when Tisdale bought into the weight-gain program right away.

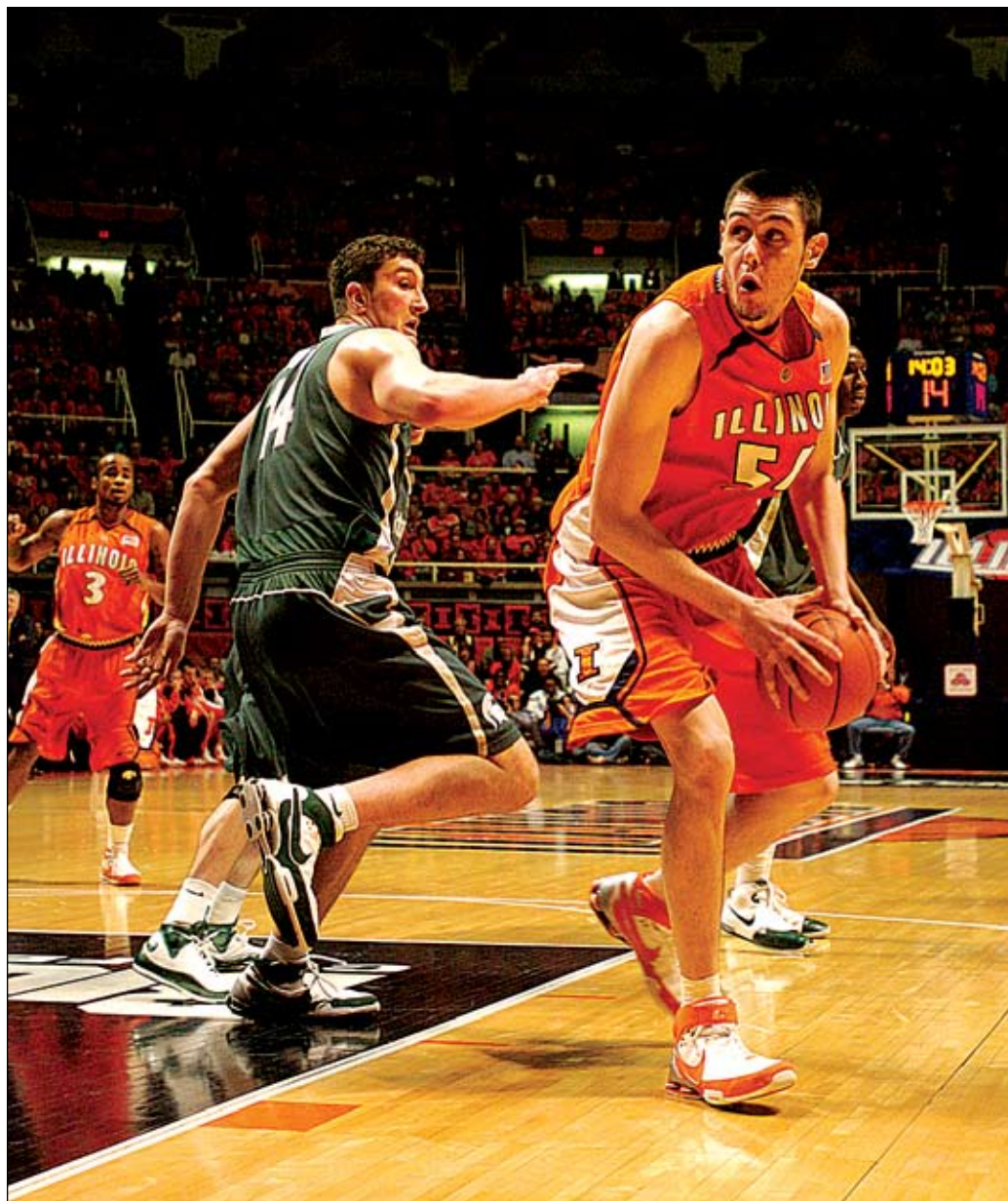
"It takes and effort and discipline to do that, and to me, that's been the most impressive thing," Weber said. Tisdale's effort has paid off. He has gained 35 pounds since last summer. More importantly, Weber said, Tisdale's been able to maintain the weight, something the 7-footer has struggled with his entire life. Tisdale said at his skinniest he weighed 185 pounds during his junior year of high school.

"I've always been the tall, skinny kid and never been able to gain weight," Tisdale said. "I mean I'd eat everything and other people's food and not be able to gain weight."

Tisdale's weight gain allowed him to play in all 35 Illinois games last season, including two starts. As a freshman, he averaged 3.6 points and 1.7 rebounds per game.

Even though the number on the scale increased, Tisdale still has a ways to go before becoming a "brute."

"He'd joke about the Wisconsin guys," Weber said. "Half the time, he ended up out of bounds



DONALD EGGERT THE DAILY ILLINI

Illinois' Mike Tisdale pivots around Michigan State's Goran Suton on March 6 at Assembly Hall. Tisdale's diet, designed to improve the he 7-foot-1 center's strength, involves eating roughly 6,000 calories per day.

when he was trying to guard them. (Greg Stiemsma was 280 and (Brian) Butch was 260, and he had no chance against those guys."

Weber said Tisdale still needs to gain "about 20 (pounds) at least," especially in his legs to gain more explosion for blocking and dunking and to be able to hold his ground against stronger defenders.

"The weight he's put on, which I'm not sure if you could see it really, but it's been more upper body," Weber said. "But if you watched him last year, he's so long. He doesn't have a low center of gravity. His legs got to get stronger. He's got to get a better base."

With the graduations of Shaun Pruitt and Brian Randle, the Illini have holes to fill in the post. Tisdale and fellow sophomore Mike Davis — who also has struggled to gain weight — are the team's most experienced post players with each averaging 10.4 minutes per game last season.

Weber hopes junior college transfer Dominique Keller who is 6-foot-7 and 235 pounds can be the bruiser Tisdale and Davis are not, but he said the sophomore duo will be key to Illinois' success this season.

"It's going to be different from (Pruitt)," Weber said. "They don't have the body or the mass that (Pruitt) had. They don't have the explosion Brian Randle has, but what they have and what they have to give, they have to be consistent with it."

With potent shooters Jamar Smith and Kentucky transfer Alex Legion added to the backcourt, Tisdale knows his path to the starting lineup is through his defensive play and understands adding weight will only help him contend with the likes of Wisconsin.

If he hits a wall in his weight gain, teammate C.J. Jackson offered him a solution.

"I'll give you 30 (pounds) of mine," the 6-foot-8, 260 pound forward said.

For center Mike Tisdale, eating and basketball are one and the same