

## Monday's results

### MLB

Mets .....3  
Cardinals .....2

Pirates .....3  
Reds .....4

Red Sox .....4  
Rays .....5

Rangers .....2  
Yankees .....1

Nationals .....5  
Marlins .....6

# What about Brian?

After an injury-plagued career and a disappointing senior season, Randle wants to prove there is still plenty of basketball left in him

BY JEREMY WERNER  
STAFF WRITER

Brian Randle didn't have high expectations during the NBA Draft last Thursday. The former Illini forward hoped he would hear his name called, so he watched the draft with roommate and former Kansas guard Russell Robinson in Houston, where the two were training. But deep down, Randle knew his name would not be uttered on ESPN that night. Just like his Illini career, Randle anticipated he had a bumpier road to travel to get to the NBA.

"At first, I really didn't expect to be drafted," Randle said. "It was more or less something to keep my hopes up for. Obviously the season I had personally wasn't one I wanted, and the team, we had had some ups and downs, even though we had a strong finish. It was just kind of one of those things that I hope for, but at the same time, I had realistic expectations."

That reality hasn't been what most envisioned for Randle when he came to Champaign-Urbana as a consensus top-50 recruit out of Peoria Notre Dame High School. Although Randle oozed athleticism and intelligence, his career at Illinois had an unsatisfying tone. The finished product was never seen, derailed by a rash of injuries.

Randle's career started promising enough as he started nine of 32 games as a freshman during the 2003-04 season. He displayed the athleticism that had been hyped as a recruit, appearing on ESPN's Top 10 plays twice for spectacular dunks.

Then came the memorable run to the NCAA championship game during the 2004-05 season. But Randle was forced to watch it from the bench with a cast over his left hand.

In a preseason November practice, a frustrated Randle punched a wall at practice, breaking his left hand. It was the first major injury of Randle's career. Before that, he had never been one to be called fragile.

All seemed to be back on track after a successful redshirt sophomore year. Randle was one of three co-captains, along with seniors James Augustine and Dee Brown during the 2005-06 season. Randle started 32 of 33 games, averaged 8.5 points and 5.4 rebounds per game and was named to the All-Big Ten Defensive team.

Before his junior season, Randle was named a preseason candidate for the Wooden Award, an honor given to college basketball's player of the year. But that would seem to be the pinnacle of Randle's career.

Randle missed nine games in November and December due to a groin injury and then missed two Big Ten games to plantar fasciitis. During his senior season, Randle averaged 9.4 points and 5.5 rebounds per game as the Illini set a



WESLEY FANE THE DAILY ILLINI

Illinois' Brian Randle maneuvers around Wisconsin's Marcus Landry during the first half of the game at Assembly Hall on February 21. Despite not being drafted last week, Randle will try to realize his NBA dream during summer league tryouts.

**More online:** What are former Illini greats James Augustine and Dee Brown up to this summer? Find out on The Daily Illini sports blog available at [DailyIllini.com](http://DailyIllini.com).

school record for most losses in a season with 19.

Randle continued to show glimpses of his potential, but injuries had taken their toll. His body seemed to move just as eloquently, but he didn't seem to trust it after multiple injuries.

The soft-spoken Randle opened up about his career: his wishes for better, but ultimately a lack of regret.

"It's not at all how I envisioned it," Randle said. "I never thought I had to do anything like that, but obviously I did. I don't regret anything just because you never know what's going to happen somewhere else or in a different circumstance that may be better or worse. For me, it really just tested me. It tested my heart and my character and how much I loved to play basketball and what I was willing to sacrifice."

Randle said he understands some fans may be disappointed with his career, but that he is going to continue to try his best whether it's

playing in the NBA, Europe or whatever ventures he takes on in his life.

"This is my gift, and this is what I've been blessed with," Randle said. "Whatever good can come from it, I'm going to work my best to do it. Basketball is a game, but it's an avenue to do great things in the world."

Randle, who has a bachelor's degree in agricultural-finance and is pursuing a master's degree in sports management, still has dreams of playing in the NBA and might have the chance. He will join former teammate Dee Brown on the Seattle SuperSonics' summer league team in Orlando from July 7-11. He may also play with the Atlanta Hawks for the Rocky Mountain Revue from July 18-25 in Salt Lake City.

After suffering through the many bad breaks in his career, Randle has turned to his faith for strength.

"I'm in the mindset that I'm going to be where God wants me to be," Randle said. "It's not going to deter me from working hard or slow me down. It's just kind of the reality. The work and the determination will pay off. Wherever I end up is where I'm supposed to be. I hope it's in the NBA. I pray for it every night, so we'll see."