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Decision time for Gavin Schilling?

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Tom Izzo stood near mid-court on Sunday evening at Breslin Center with a microphone in his hand and some fire-and-brimstone in his heart.

It was Michigan State's Senior Day celebration for lone Spartan senior Derrick Nix, who listened to his fiery coach while standing alongside his mother after MSU's 71-61 victory against Northwestern.

"I don't ever want to get anything back-door," Izzo said, riling up those who stayed to cheer Nix. "I'm a bust 'em right through the front door kind of guy and that's the way we are ... and that's the way you are!"



Michigan State made a strong impression on Gavin Schilling and his family who were in East Lansing on an official visit last weekend.

night, a day after returning to Findlay Prep for school. "It almost had me tearing up. Some of the people next to me were tearing up. It was a really nice speech. Derrick Nix had a great career there and he deserved it."

As for Izzo's speech and a subsequent meeting in the coach's office that followed, both resonated with Schilling.

"I love his style and his character and all that kind of stuff," said Schilling, a bit of a late-bloomer who's a year ahead of where his age normally would place him in school. "He was saying he's a blue-collar guy and that he's worked for everything he got. That just shows you what type of guy he is. He's a hard-working coach and deserves everything he receives."

The question now, as it pertains to Schilling, is whether Izzo will receive his signature on a national letter-of-intent this spring.

Michigan State has two scholarships available after Chicago Simeon small forward prospect Jabari Parker picked Duke and former Spartan guard Brandan Kearney transferred.

The Spartans would like to assign Schilling's name to one of them in the 2013 class.

Schilling said he will not use his fifth - and final - official visit. He also said there is still no leader among his four finalists (Michigan State, Minnesota, UCLA and Villanova). The Spartans, however, might have hit a home run while batting clean-up among the four officials.

He took in a practice on Saturday before hanging out with Spartan players afterward - including a team viewing of the action thriller "Dead Man Down," on Saturday night.

The crowd roared its approval, and standing among the throngs of fans was Gavin Schilling - a 6-foot-9, 240-pound senior power forward recruit. He couldn't help but feel emotions stirring inside, as he neared the conclusion of an official campus visit.

Schilling, who's from Chicago but played his senior season at top-ranked and undefeated Findlay Prep in Henderson, Nev., was rapt with attention.

"It was a great speech," Schilling told Spartanmag.com on Monday

After bonding with the likes of Matt Costello, Gary Harris and others, he spent Sunday touring the campus with his parents and a guide from the MSU basketball office.

The final stop was the game.

"It's a cool atmosphere being in Breslin Center," Schilling said. "I'd never been to a Michigan State game before, so that was cool to see."

The Schillings also made a stop at the Eli Broad School of Business.

Schilling, who has lived in France, Germany and the U.S., said he plans to focus on international business as his collegiate academic discipline, no matter which school he picks.

They met with an MSU professor to discuss those academic interests and learn more about the international business program - which Schilling listed among the positives of his trip. Another was the postgame meeting with Izzo and the other MSU coaches.

"After the game, we went to coach Izzo's office ... and right before I left, we all sat down and talked," Schilling said. "We had a great conversation and looked at some film of some guys that reminded him of me-guys that he coached."

One of the comparable players shown was former Spartan star Draymond Green.

"He said if I work hard and all that stuff, I could be in that position and develop that kind of way," Schilling said. "He told me that Draymond wasn't a great shooter and wasn't as skilled when he got there as he was when he left. He said I have some similarities, so if I'm willing to work hard I could eventually be that way."

Schilling has already shown a good work ethic at Findlay Prep, where Pilots head coach Todd Simon raved about the improvements his power forward has made on both ends of the floor. Schilling has put on good weight and added strength in the weight room, while also developing his shot and inside game.

He's still a bit of a project, but there is a lot of upside there - especially when you consider that Schilling just turned 17 this past November. After not getting Parker, a major blue-chip prospect, Izzo probably sees a diamond-in-the-rough candidate in Schilling - who's got the size and raw skills to make an impact in the Big Ten.

It says quite a bit that Izzo's competition in this race are UCLA coach Ben Howland, Minnesota coach Tubby Smith and Villanova coach Jay Wright - some familiar coaching names in the college basketball world.

Schilling plans to make his decision in the next couple of weeks, so now the Spartans must wait and hope the bonds forged on this last visit are strong enough to get a commitment.

As it turned out, it wasn't just Gavin who enjoyed the visit. His parents did, too, after enjoying a previous unofficial visit to MSU during the holidays. Schilling's father lives in Germany and runs a major publishing company, while his mother and younger brother reside in Chicago.

"They really liked it," Schilling said. "My dad, he's German and he's kind of a hard-headed, typical German. But he related to what coach Izzo had to say and they both really like each other. My mom also likes coach Izzo a lot."

Watching Izzo hug Nix and his mother a couple times, before and after the coach's impassioned speech, might've something to do with it.

"When I left campus, I had a good feeling about Michigan State," said Schilling, who gave his visit the same 'two thumbs up' grade as he gave the action film he saw. "It's a great school and [Izzo's] a great coach. He really didn't force anything on me [about making a commitment]. Coach Izzo respects the other three schools on my list and just told me to take my time and let this decision be a good one and a smart one."