



PHOTOS BY BEN MIKESELL | IDS
Indianapolis native Brian Stapleton, 50, awaits ticket buyers on Indiana Avenue before IU's Homecoming football game against Michigan State. Stapleton, known more by his alias, Jeffrey, has been scalping tickets for 18 years, and often ventures to Bloomington in hopes of making a profit, even though ticket sales for IU football are the worst in the Big Ten. The ticket scalper on the street corner is a dying breed, as online sites such as Stubhub and Ticketmaster are making scalping obsolete.

‘Sold, not told’

Scalping tickets for IU football has never been easy. Now, it’s even harder.

By Evan Hoopfer
ehoopfer@indiana.edu | @EvanHoopfer

On a misty Saturday morning, the scalper stands at his corner, the stadium looming behind him. He’s right at the edge. The cops are watching, and if he walks a few feet north and crosses into IU property, he’s in danger of getting arrested.

“Tickets?” Jeffrey calls out to the masses shuffling his way. “You need tickets?”

He can see the hope in the fans’ eyes. It’s late August, and IU is playing its first game of the football season against Indiana State. Maybe this year will be different, the fans are telling themselves. Maybe the team will have its first winning record in the Big Ten since 1993. A good chunk of the players on this year’s squad weren’t even born then. Maybe IU will make it to a bowl. Any bowl.

Jeffrey is counting on their early-season optimism. As long as they still believe, his profits go up.

He sees a potential customer and holds up a pair of tickets. He can tell when someone wants to deal. There’s a certain walk. A look of purpose in their eyes. Jeffrey thinks the man walking toward him has that look.

“You need tickets, big guy?” Jeffrey asks. He talks fast and his voice is rough, because he’s been yelling his sales pitch for almost two decades.

“No,” the man says. “I’m fine.”

“Fifty-yard line, 50-yard line big man,” Jeffrey says. “Put her in the front!”

The man is alone. The rhetorical woman is just part of Jeffrey’s pitch.

The guy walks past, avoiding eye contact. Jeffrey doesn’t take it personally.

“You’ll get 15,000 no’s before you hear a yes,” he says. “You can’t be sensitive in this business.”

He needs to make some money off today’s game. He has an ex-wife, five kids, bills to pay. So he tries one last time before the man disappears.

“Put her in the front, home opener,” Jeffrey yells at the guy’s back. The man doesn’t even glance over his shoulder.

Nothing.

* * *

Scalping tickets at IU football games has never been easy. Demand is always low to see a team that has been so bad for so long it has become a punch line. But now, scalping outside of Memorial Stadium is harder than ever.



"Dirty" gets his name for being loud, obnoxious and flirtatious with the women he encounters while trying to conduct business. "Want to know my real name? Dirty as they come," he said, laughing heavily.

In recent years, online ticket sites such as StubHub have sliced into the profits of the guy on the street corner. Ever since StubHub became a household name, street scalpers have found it more difficult to scrounge out a living, especially during IU’s football season. They’re not allowed on University grounds. Most scalpers hang out on the south side of 17th Street, just across from the stadium’s parking lots, where Indiana Avenue comes to a T.

The area is alive with activity before opening kickoff. The smell of barbecue chicken fills the air. From the tailgate fields, Lil Jon pounds from the speakers, singing “Shots, shots, shots, shots, shots, shots.” Across the street at the stadium, the Marching 100 plays the IU fight song.

The scalpers prowl the sidewalks, trying to drown out their competition with calls of “Tickets? Tickets? Anybody need tickets?” They wander in and out of traffic, leaning into open car windows. They eye the scantily dressed co-eds on their way to tailgate parties. When they spy an interested customer, the scalpers pounce, sometimes several at once. They elbow their competitors, fighting for the chance to negotiate.

Jeffrey’s favorite spot is the south-

The hottest tickets in the Big Ten

Usually, a winning program equals more tickets sold. This is a ranking of the teams in the Big Ten who sold the most tickets during the 2014 season.

1. Ohio State	8. Iowa
2. Michigan	9. Maryland
3. Michigan State	10. Northwestern
4. Penn State	11. Minnesota
5. Wisconsin	12. Illinois
6. Nebraska	13. Purdue
7. Rutgers	14. Indiana

SOURCE STUBHUB

west corner of Indiana and 17th. He patrols his turf with a confidence gained after 18 years of scalping sporting events and concerts around the country. He moves with the swiftness of a younger man. His booming voice rises above the competition with a precisely honed cadence.

“You guys need tickets? No? OK, you fellas have a nice day.”

His name is actually Brian Stapleton. He adopted the name Jeffrey years ago. His mentor knew him as Jeffrey, so everyone knew him as Jeffrey. It stuck.

“Tickets? Who needs tickets?”

The scalpers show no hesitation. This is their trading floor. One of the

perennial figures calls himself Dirty. He insists he’s 53 but looks much younger. He usually wears sunglasses, even on rainy days like today. Dirty never gives up his real name.

“Want to know my real name?” he cackles. “Dirty as they come.”

Dirty is constantly moving, usually riding around on his bike. His pitch is one of the loudest.

“You got any tickets?” Dirty says to a woman wearing tight jeans.

“No,” she says. As she walks away, he checks her out.

“You got a man?” he says, only partly under his breath.

SEE SCALPING, PAGE 16