

Pershing's Derrick Nix named Mr. Basketball

Early this season, Derrick Nix was explaining to a reporter how losing weight had made him a significantly better player than he was a year ago and how this season he is able to make plays that were impossible for him to make a year ago.

"I was way too big last year," Nix said. "I'm still a little big now, but I'm still losing weight. I'm proud of myself, my teammates are proud of me, my coach is proud of me, you're proud of me, everybody's proud of me."

He can add the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan to the list of those who are proud of the Detroit Pershing senior.

Today, Derrick Nix becomes the 29th recipient of the Hal Schram Mr. Basketball Award, given annually to the state's top senior by BCAM, in conjunction with the Detroit Free Press.

Nix, 6-feet-9 center, has signed to play at Michigan State. He accumulated 1,726 points to edge Ben Simons of Cadillac, who had 1,638 points.

Also on the ballot were Korey VanDussen of Zeeland East, who was third (1,298 points), Dion Sims of Orchard Lake St. Mary's (1,027 points) and Eso Akunne of Ann Arbor Richard (782).

Only BCAM members are permitted to vote for Mr. Basketball and points are awarded on a 5-3-1 basis.

The award is named for the late Hal Schram, who covered high school athletics for the Free Press for more than 40 years.

Winning the award is a remarkable achievement for Nix considering where he was as a player last season.

It was Nix's first at Pershing. He spent his first two years

of high school at Detroit Murray-Wright and moved to Pershing when Murray-Wright closed.

Nix gradually worked his way into the Pershing lineup last season and made a steady improvement as the Doughboys advanced to the Class A finals. But Nix was no better than Pershing's third or fourth option last season.

"Last year he could barely play two or three minutes at a time," said Pershing coach A.W. Canada. "He's improved by leaps and bounds. He made the commitment to get in better shape."

This season was a different story when Nix showed up 30 pounds lighter and infinitely more agile.

Nix is averaging 15 points and 15 rebounds for the No. 1 Doughboys, who play Warren De La Salle in a Class A quarterfinal game Tuesday at 7:30 at Calihan Hall.

A hand injury to highly regarded Pershing junior Keith Appling early this season made Nix the focal point of the Pershing offense. He responded with several dominating performances and worked his way onto the Mr. Basketball ballot.

"I was just happy and excited when I found out about this," Nix said. "I thought if I kept playing hard and we kept winning I might have a chance to win this."

Nix is the second player from the Detroit Public School League to win the award in the last three years. Corperryale (Manny) Harris of Detroit Redford won the award two seasons ago.

He is also the third Pershing player to become Mr. Basketball. Winfred Walton won the award in 1996 and Willie Mitchell won it in 1994.

Next season MSU will have its 10th Mr. Basketball on its roster, tying it with Michigan for the most former Mr. Basketballs.

The voting

Here are the results of the 29th annual Hal Schram Mr. Basketball award, given by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan, in conjunction with the Detroit Free Press. Only BCAM members are permitted to vote.

1. Derrick Nix, Detroit Pershing - 1,726 points
2. Ben Simons, Cadillac - 1,638 points
3. Korey VanDussen, Zeeland East - 1,298 points
4. Dion Sims, Orchard Lake St. Mary's - 1,027 points
5. Eso Akunne, Ann Arbor Richard - 782 points

Note: Points are awarded on a 5-3-1 basis.