

Michigan's Retro Mr. Basketball selections – Years Ending in “4”

Started in 2010, this is the fifth year of the award, honoring Michigan's greatest prep players from the past.

As in the previous years, the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan committee met Saturday between sessions of the annual MHSAA Boys Basketball tournament to make their selections.

Here are this year's winners.

1924 - Bennie Oosterbaan - Muskegon

Earned first team High School All America honors at the 1923 University of Chicago National Interscholastic tournament as a junior, Oosterbaan led Muskegon to the 1923 state basketball title, where he was named to the All-Tournament team. Later earned All-American honors at the University of Michigan in both football and basketball.

*(Other nominees: **John "Bo" Molenda**, Detroit Northeastern; **Louis Gilbert**, Kalamazoo Central; **Fred DenHerder**, Grand Haven.)*

1934 - Earl Brown, Jr - Benton Harbor

Great center and the outstanding individual performer in the Southwestern Michigan Conference, where he was named to the team as both a junior and senior. Led the league in scoring in his senior year. Later starred in football and basketball at Notre Dame.

*(Other nominees: **Herman Fishman**, Detroit Northern; **Victor Vanderburg**, Kalamazoo State University; **Eddie Payne**, Grand Rapids Ottawa Hills.)*

1944 - Dick Rifenburg, Saginaw Arthur Hill

After watching him perform in the semifinals and finals of the MHSAA basketball tournament in the spring of 1944, veteran basketball observers, tagged Rifenburg as one of the greatest in the previous twenty years. Ended his high school career with 352 points, including 24 in the Lumberjack's state title win over Kalamazoo Central.

*(Other nominees: **Jack Weisenburger**, Muskegon Heights; **Donald Groggel**, Kalamazoo Central; **Dick Hall**, Detroit Mckenzie, **John Rakoczy**, Orchard Lake St. Mary.)*

1954 - Pete Tillotson, Ludington, 6-6.

Scored 1,176 points in his high school career, including 564 as a senior. The spark of three Oriole teams that won the North-Central B league title and advanced to the Class B MHSAA championship game in 1953.

*(Other nominees: **George Duncan**, Highland Park; **George Lee**, Highland Park; **Art Gowens**, Lansing Sexton; **Gary Giffen**, Bay City Central.)*

1964 - Willie Betts, River Rouge, 6-5.

A three-sport star, Betts earned *Detroit Free Press All-State* honors in three consecutive years - a first at the time. A solid scorer, Betts' real value to Lofton Greene's Panthers was his exceptional defense. An outstanding playmaker, he hauled in more than 1,100 rebounds in his career, and he remains the only player in state tournament history to play for four

consecutive state championship basketball teams.

(Other nominees: **Jim Bigham**, Grosse Pointe St. Paul; **Ralph Brisker**, Hamtramck; **Bruce Rodwan**, Ferndale; **Richard Schrumpf**, Galien; **Pat Groleau**, Nahma.)

1974 - Tony Smith, Saginaw, 6-2.

Averaged 23.3 points a game as a senior, Smith also averaged nine assists per game.

Totaled 1,287 points in his career with the Trojans. A nephew of 1962 Retro Mr. Basketball award winner. Named All-State by the Free Press, the *Detroit News* and the Associated Press.

(Other nominees: **Jeff Tropsf**, Holt; **Cyrus Mann**, Detroit Southeastern; **John Long**, Romulus; **Turono Anderson**, Detroit Kettering; **Terry Tyler**, Detroit Northwestern.)

For more detail on BCAM's Retro program, visit

<http://peschstats.com/MrBasketball.htm>