

East Lansing's Jaida Hampton named Michigan's 2018 Miss Basketball

March 9, 2018 by Mick McCabe



Jaida Hampton made East Lansing's varsity basketball team as a freshman, but she didn't play like a freshman.

She was even better as a sophomore, but midway through that season something extraordinary happened.

"Jaida's 'aha' moment," East Lansing coach Rob Smith said, "came when [Taryn McCutcheon](#) transferred."

McCutcheon was a senior who had signed to play at Michigan State. She came from West Virginia, where she had been a first-team all-stater three times, to be closer to the place she would play her college basketball.

She joined the East Lansing team in midseason and things began to click for the Trojans.

"That changed things for everybody," Hampton said. "It put a true point guard that had experience. She made everybody better. She made shots open for everybody else that we didn't even know were possible. She would see passes before we knew we were open."

But more than anyone, it changed Hampton's approach to basketball.

“I learned to be confident,” she said. “She would talk to me about being confident and when coach was being on me when I was doing something wrong, to keep my head up and keep playing.”

McCutcheon remembers Hampton as outgoing and one of the first players to embrace her when she moved to East Lansing.

She also remembers being impressed with Hampton’s skill level for a sophomore.

“I just remember thinking how much potential she had,” McCutcheon said. “She was already good, but seeing a sophomore with two more years of high school, I was thinking how much better she could get and how much potential she had.”



East Lansing's Jaida Hampton celebrates after an assist to teammate Amelia McNutt to finish the second quarter on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at Loy Norrix High School in Kalamazoo. (Photo: Nick King/Lansing State Journal)

In the back of her mind, McCutcheon thought Hampton might one day become the best player in the state.

“I thought she had the potential,” McCutcheon said. “I thought she could do very well. It doesn’t surprise me because I knew she had it in her.”

That came to fruition Friday when Hampton, who is [signed with Wichita State](#), was named the state’s 37th Miss Basketball, given annually to the state’s top senior by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan.

Hampton, 5-feet-11, received 353 of the 976 first-place votes, totaling 2,688 points. Wayne's Camree' Clegg was second with 2,433 points followed by Birmingham Detroit Country Day's Kaela Webb (2,031) and Lasha Petree (1,632) of Ypsilanti Arbor Prep. Hampton joins 2010 grad [Klarissa Bell](#) as the second East Lansing player to be Miss Basketball.

Hampton was overjoyed when her mother told her she had won the award earlier this week.

"I'm just thankful, really," she said. "I'm trying to stay humble and not act like anything different happened because we still do have games to play."

Indeed they do. East Lansing (24-0) plays Muskegon (23-2) Tuesday in a Class A quarterfinal game at DeWitt, with the winner moving on to Friday's semifinals at Calvin College in Grand Rapids.

Hampton is averaging 16.1 points and five rebounds this season, hitting 63 percent of her shots from the field.

She has expanded her game during her career. As a freshman she made only 16 percent of her 3-point shots but now is hitting 43 percent of her shots from behind the arc.



East Lansing's Jaida Hampton, center, shoots as Kalamazoo Central's Lakaria Washington, left, and Talia Edmonds defend during the fourth quarter on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at Loy Norrix High School in Kalamazoo. (Photo: Nick King/Lansing State Journal)

She is one of the most versatile players in the state. On senior night, she hit seven of nine 3-point attempts, then, earlier this week, went inside and scored clutch baskets in the post during the deciding moments of the regional semifinal win over Kalamazoo Central.

"She's East Lansing's version of Michael Jordan," said Smith. "She can take the team on her back, but she can also distribute. She can go down low and post up. She can shoot the 3-ball, and she can take you off the dribble.

"And what's most impressive about Jaida is she's been a team player. She wants to win."

Hampton remembers hearing about the award when she was a freshman and [Goodrich's Tania Davis was the state's Miss Basketball](#).

The next year she decided she wanted to become Miss Basketball and was not shy about telling people about her lofty goal.

"I'm the type of person that I like to speak things into existence," Hampton said. "I'm never going to say: 'I could, I might.' I'm always going to keep saying I can do something, speaking out to the world is how you get it done, that's how you make yourself believe it.

"I knew I was going to keep working hard enough to become known as the best player in the state."

One of the things that struck McCutcheon about Hampton is how badly she wanted to improve herself and how willing she was to become a better player.

"I did notice that when I got there she was very willing to listen to me and to work just as hard in drills," McCutcheon said. "When I would talk to her about work ethic she did work a lot harder. She was open to listening to me when I would suggest things. When I would try to help her with certain things she was really, really coachable. She liked to learn."

In McCutcheon, Hampton found a role model, someone she wanted to emulate on the court.

"Because she could dribble so well, she made me want to dribble well, too," Hampton said. "I would think about what she told me like keep driving, keep shooting, keep playing my hardest on defense and things like that. I really tried to live up to her."

Hampton had to improve on her already good work ethic to live up to the example McCutcheon set.

"She was able to show her what an elite-level player does," Smith said. "She was one of the most incredible basketball minds I'd ever worked with and she could do it all. I think that really motivated Jaida to want to elevate her game.

"That was kind of that moment where Jaida wanted that and she wanted to be that girl."

And now she is that girl: Miss Basketball, 2018.

How they voted

Here are the results of the 37th annual Miss Basketball award, given by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan. Only "actively coaching" BCAM members are permitted to vote.

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| 1. Jaida Hampton, East Lansing | 2,688 points |
| 2. Camree' Clegg, Wayne Memorial | 2,433 points |
| 3. Kaela Webb, Detroit Country Day | 2,031 points |
| 4. Lasha Petree, Ypsilanti Arbor Prep | 1,632 points |

Votes are awarded on a 5-3-1 basis.