

Pershing Ace Keith Appling Wins Mr Basketball - www.wxyz.com, March 22, 2010

A year ago, Detroit Pershing guard Keith Appling made himself the overwhelming favorite for the 2010 Mr. Basketball award.

He made it official Monday, winning the award in a lopsided vote and making Pershing the first school with back-to-back winners since Lansing Eastern in 1981-82. Pershing's Derrick Nix, now at Michigan State, was honored last year as the state's top high school player.

"There's so much talent at Pershing, and those guys are the ones that helped me win this," Appling said. "It's a great feeling to get this, especially after Derrick won it for us last year."

Last March, Appling and the Doughboys made it to the Class A championship game, but the spotlight was supposed to belong to Nix. He had just won his own Mr. Basketball award and was expected to lead his team to victory over Kalamazoo Central.

It didn't happen that way, though. While Nix was having one of the worst games of his career -- scoring four points and committing both flagrant and technical fouls -- Appling stole the show. He scored 49 points, breaking Antoine Joubert's 26-year-old title-game record of 47, and led Pershing to a 90-73 victory.

"That game showed everyone in the state what kind of player Keith is, and what kind of fire he has," Pershing coach A.W. Canada said. "That was a game where he had to take over, because Derrick wasn't doing anything and no one else could hit anything. He went out there and carried the team to the championship."

This season, playing on a weaker roster, Appling averaged 28 points, six rebounds and five assists. The Doughboys, though, lost to Detroit Denby in the regional finals last week.

"Winning this makes up a little for not getting to defend our state title, but I'd still rather get a chance at that," Appling said. "It hurt to lose that game."

Appling, who will join Nix at Michigan State this fall, finished with 328 first-place votes, nearly three times as many as the 114 received by runner-up Trey Zeigler of Mount Pleasant.

"Keith is going to be a great fit at Michigan State," Canada said. "Right now, when things break down for them, Kalin Lucas is the only guy they have that can kill you off the dribble, so teams can guard that. Keith is going to give them a second player like that, and that's tough to stop."