

Mick McCabe: Bay City Western's Matt Costello shares Mr. Basketball award with all who helped him

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Matt Costello was driving home from Columbus, Ohio, on Saturday after watching Michigan State's second-round NCAA tournament game the night before when he heard two words no teenager wants to hear when he is behind the wheel: "Pull over."

The person instructing Costello to pull over was not a police officer; it was his Bay City Western basketball coach, Chris Watz, who was speaking to him on the phone.

Watz needed to tell Costello something and he didn't want the 6-foot-10, 245-pound senior swerving his car all over I-75 after he heard the news: He is Mr. Basketball.

Costello is the 32nd recipient of the Hal Schram Mr. Basketball Award, given annually by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan, in conjunction with the Free Press.

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

Costello, who received 299 first-place votes, accumulated 2,232 points in voting by BCAM members while Denzel Valentine of Lansing Sexton was second with 213 first-place votes and 1,895 points. Both Costello and Valentine will play college basketball at MSU.

This season Costello averaged 25.1 points, 17.8 rebounds, 4.0 assists and 4.0 blocks a game. He is the career leader in points (1,518), rebounds (1,069) and blocked shots (280).

At Monday's news conference, Costello began by thanking his parents and his twin

brother, John, who had not planned to play basketball this year so he could concentrate on his music. He is the No. 1 chair in saxophone in the all-state band.

"I'd like to thank my brother for playing this season with me," he said. "He didn't have to and without him it would have been hard to get this award because he took a lot of pressure off me down low. Even with his knees, he played like a warrior."

He thanked Watz and named every coach he had since he began playing travel basketball after his eighth-grade year, including Tim McCormick.

Costello had a special relationship with former Saginaw coach Lou Dawkins, now an assistant at Northern Illinois, who coached him after his freshman and sophomore years.

"He gave me a vision of what basketball could be," he said. "I played a different kind of basketball, but he taught me how to play hard and with a passion and how to fight. People say how I play with a fire and go crazy out there, but without him I wouldn't be able to do that."

He also mentioned Dawkins' late son Dorian, with whom Costello played before the youngster died almost two years ago of a heart ailment at a summer camp.

"Dorian Dawkins is the best point guard I ever had," he said. "He taught me how to play with somebody instead of just looking for yourself."

Costello is the 12th Mr. Basketball overall and fourth straight to sign with MSU. (Last year's winner, Dwaun Anderson of Sutton's Bay enrolled at Wagner instead of MSU.)

He said he is looking forward to playing for MSU coach Tom Izzo, who has been known to be a bit animated while dealing with his players in the heat of a game.

"I wouldn't say my dad's as crazy as him, but he is kind of crazy, so I've got a little taste of it," Costello said, laughing. "But I watch him out there, especially you saw him Sunday with Brandan Kearney. He was flipping out on him. It's something to look forward to because you're going to have somebody who's going to challenge you and depending on how you face that challenge is if you're going to play or not. So I want that challenge so I can see if I'm ready to play."

Before he left the news conference, Costello did have something he wanted to say.

"I can't stress how much I'm happy my brother played this season with me," he said. "He didn't have to at all. But he chose to and just to spend more time with me. And even though we fight all the time, he's still my brother and I love him for that."

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Here are the results of the 32nd annual Hal Schram Mr. Basketball award, given by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan, in conjunction with the Detroit Free Press. Only "actively coaching" BCAM members are permitted to vote.

PLAYER	SCHOOL	PTS
Matt Costello	Bay City Western	2,232
Denzel Valentine	Lansing Sexton	1,895
John Simons	Cadillac	1,095
Connar Tava	Warren De La Salle	607
Lloyd Neely	Detroit Crockett	480

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