

Cassius Winston named Michigan's Mr. Basketball



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It has been almost four years since an incoming freshman to U-D Jesuit wrote down his goals for his high school career:

- Become Mr. Basketball
- Win four Catholic League championships
- Win a state championship
- Be selected to play in the McDonald's All-America game.

Cassius Winston checked off another item from that list today, when he became the 36th recipient of the Hal Schram Mr. Basketball Award. The award is given annually to the state's top senior by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan, in conjunction with the Detroit Free Press. The award is named for Hal Schram, who covered high school athletics for the Free Press for more than 40 years.

Winston, who will be the 13th Mr. Basketball to play at Michigan State, was the runaway winner, amassing 4,286 points. Onsted's Austin Davis, who has signed with

Michigan, was second, with 2,829 points.

“It was definitely a good feeling to win this,” Winston said. “It was one of those goals that you set out, and you actually accomplished it.”

Earlier this season, Winston became the only player in Catholic League history to [start on four consecutive championship teams in the largest division](#). He's also just the second CHSL player to be named Mr. Basketball, following Southgate Aquinas' Jon Garavaglia in 1993.

Although the 6-footer wasn't selected to play in the McDonald's game, he will be [in the Jordan Brand game](#), another high-profile national all-star game.

And Winston will continue his quest to win U-D Jesuit's first state championship when he leads the Cubs in Tuesday's Class A quarterfinal game against Ypsilanti at 5 p.m. at Calihan Hall in Detroit.

U-D coach Pat Donnelly first saw Winston play when the youngster was in the sixth grade and his AAU team was practicing at U-D Jesuit.

“My initial impression was: ‘Boy, this is kid pretty good, he could play for us right now,’” Donnelly said.

Winston attended U-D's academy in the seventh and eighth grade and often found himself playing against high school players.

“He was playing with us in open gyms in the seventh grade, with the varsity guys, and doing a great job,” Donnelly said.

As a freshman, Winston came off the bench for the first few games before an injury opened a spot for him in the starting lineup. He has been a starter ever since.

He averaged 16 points per game his first season, and that improved to 17 as a sophomore, 21.5 as a junior and 22.5 as a senior. This season, he also is averaging 5.2 assists and 6.8 rebounds.

“The biggest thing I see out of him, in terms of improvement, is his ability to handle pressure,” Donnelly said. “Every opposing defense is focused on him. He got double-teamed and trapped off every ball screen. He got double-teamed every time he touched the ball, but his stats improved, scoringwise, his shooting percentages went up, his assists were about the same.

“For him to be producing the way he is with the way the defense is being played on him is just kind of remarkable.”

Winston said he first became aware of the Mr. Basketball Award in 2010, when Detroit Pershing's Keith Appling won.

Donnelly called Winston on Saturday and began the conversation by telling him that he had spoken with Al Snyder, chairman of the Mr. Basketball award. Donnelly paused before saying anything else. He sensed a bit of panic on Winston's end of the phone.

“There was a little bit,” Winston said, laughing.

After the pause, Donnelly told him he is Mr. Basketball.

“It was relief,” Winston said. “The hard work paid off.”

And it was time to check off a goal on the list.

“From my track record, anything I put my mind to, I tend to make it happen,” Winston said. “I wrote those goals down and I've been working toward them.”