

Michigan Mr. Basketball: Clarkston's Foster Loyer wins in runaway vote

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Foster Loyer was in the seventh grade when his family moved to Michigan and settled in Clarkston.

Already a dedicated basketball player, Loyer remembers Matt Costello winning the Hal Schram Mr. Basketball award that year and immediately understood the significance of the honor.

"Yeah, absolutely," Loyer said. "My mom grew up in Indiana, my dad grew up in Ohio so that's a really big thing there as well."

But it took Loyer another two years before he knew that someday his name could be etched on the Mr. Basketball trophy.

"From the get-go my freshman year, that was my ultimate dream," he said. "I started the first game and I started every game since then. After my freshman year I looked back on it and realized where I could progress to and, if I kept getting better, what I could become.

"That's when I thought it became real realistic."

From realistic to reality, Loyer became the state's 38th Mr. Basketball on Monday, winning the award in landslide fashion.

Loyer, a 6-foot point guard with a 3.96 grade-point average who signed with Michigan State, received twice as many first-place votes from members of the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan as any of the five finalists, totaling 3,691 points.

East Lansing's Brandon Johns (2,792 points) and Detroit East English's Village's David DeJulius (2,542), who both signed with Michigan, finished second and third.

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

Playing for coach Dan Fife, Loyer has led Clarkston to a 93-6 record

in the games he played, missing only this season's regular season finale after suffering a deep knee bruise.

"It's just an honor to accept this," Loyer said. "Coach Fife was awesome about it; I can't thank him enough. He made me the player to put me in this spot. Coach Fife and our program at Clarkston is a big part of where I am today."

This season, Loyer averaged 27 points, seven assists, four rebounds and three steals in leading Clarkston to a 23-1 record and a spot in Tuesday's quarterfinals against Flint Carman-Ainsworth at Grand Blanc.

Loyer built an amazing resume in his four-year career. He is 12th in the state in scoring (2,222 points), 10th in assists (575), seventh in 3-point field goals (258) second in free throws made (611) and second in free-throw percentage (611 of 679).

To top it off, Loyer carried Clarkston to the school's first state championship last season with two phenomenal performances. In the semifinals, he scored 32 points with seven assists and followed that with 29 points and three assists in the championship game.

It was only Clarkston's second semifinal game in program history and Loyer remembers the mindset he took into that game.

"Going into the semifinal game was a lot of my teammates' first time being in a big arena," he said. "I had grown up in big arenas like that. Some kids had never shot on hoops not attached to the ceiling. I knew it was important for me to walk in like it was no different, we were playing the same game."

Loyer literally grew up in big arenas, tagging along with his father, John, who was an NBA assistant coach in Portland, Philadelphia, New Jersey and Detroit, where he eventually became the Pistons interim head coach.

As a youngster, Loyer was front and center for all of those stops. As a toddler in Portland, he shot when they lowered the baskets after games. In Philadelphia, he would sit and watch Allen Iverson's mother braid her son's hair before games and then he would shadowbox with Iverson before he took the floor.

Throughout his career, Loyer played as if no moment was too big for him. He never seems rattled, no matter the situation.

“He doesn’t panic and he’s comfortable in his surroundings,” said Fife. “If he’s nervous, he doesn’t show it.”

Just watching the manner in which he runs a team, Loyer exhibits a basketball pedigree not often found in high school players.

“He’s got an unbelievable basketball IQ,” Fife said. “His movement, his understanding of people and where they’re at, he sees the game.” As he got older, Loyer became a ball boy for the NBA teams his father coached.

He intently studied the players and how they played and acted in the locker room.

He didn’t try to become any one of those players, but he took aspects of their game and incorporated them into the way he played. He still does that today.

“I take a lot of reads off Steph Curry – how he can get his shot off in different spaces,” Loyer said. “Obviously, he shoots the ball really well from really deep. I don’t say I necessarily shoot it as deep as he does, but I’m definitely not afraid to shoot it deep, either.

“He’s 6-3, but he’s a pretty slim dude, he doesn’t wow anybody with dunking the ball or anything like that. Watching him is fun; I like to take little things from his game.”

These last four years have been fun for Fife, who has been able to coach a second Mr. Basketball winner. His son, Dane, now an MSU assistant, won the award in 1998.

Better than most, Dan Fife understands this award is about more than someone who is just a talented basketball player.

“Foster’s not just defined by his basketball,” he said. “He’s defined by the way he conducts his life, the way he is in the classroom. It’s his academics, his athletics, his personalities. It’s his values, I guess, his character values.”

Like Curry, there are people who look at Loyer’s size and question how he will be able to compete at the next level.

If anything, Loyer is shrewd with the ball. He figures out how to get off his shots whether they be from the perimeter with a player in his face or inside among the trees.

“For sure being undersized and having to finish around bigger guys – having to make shots – you have to be crafty just to get your shot off,” Loyer said. “Life would be a little bit easier if I was 6-8, but I’m all right

with where I'm at and we'll go from there.”

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Mr. Basketball voting

Here are the results of the 38th annual Hal Schram Mr. Basketball award, given by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan. Only BCAM members are permitted to vote:

1. Foster Loyer, Clarkston ... 3,691 points
2. Brandon Johns, East Lansing ... 2,792 points
3. David DeJulius, Detroit East English ... 2,542 points
4. Marcus Bingham Jr. Grand Rapids CC ... 1,405 points
5. Trevion Williams, Henry Ford Academy SCS ... 1,024 points

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