

2018 Retro Mr. Basketball Winners Announced

BCAM ANNOUNCES THE NINTH GROUP OF RETRO MR. BASKETBALL WINNERS.

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Walker tops DeBusschere in Retro Mr. Basketball balloting.

East Lansing, MI – The lone meeting between Detroit Austin Catholic and Benton Harbor was a highly anticipated and hotly contested match-up for the Class A title in 1958. The game, won by Austin Catholic, featured a match-up between two of Michigan's top senior ballplayers. The future for both Austin's Dave DeBusschere and Benton Harbor's Chet Walker was richly rewarding.

However, that future, which saw college and NBA success for both players, is not the focus of the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan's "Retro" Mr. Basketball Award.

In 1981, BCAM, in cooperation with the *Detroit Free Press*, kicked off the Mr. Basketball program that still honors the state's top senior prep player. Retro Mr. Basketball, which was launched in 2010, is designed to mimic the modern day award.

"The project recognizes that Michigan high schools have played basketball for many years prior to 1981," said Ron Pesch, Michigan High School Athletic Association historian and the chief researcher for the 'Retro' undertaking. "The goal of the award is to identify and honor Michigan's top senior cagers, beginning with the 1920 season and working forward to 1980. Information is gathered from old All-State and All-Conference teams, newspaper clippings and high school yearbooks to create a ballot of the best ballplayers for a given season. The data is then examined by a committee of veteran BCAM members who pare the lists down to the year's top five or six high school ballplayers. Finally, the committee votes to name the winners of Michigan's Retro Mr. Basketball award."

"The project spans ten years and will wrap up in 2019," said Tom Hursey, BCAM director. "This year, Retro awards were picked for the years that end in eight: 1928, 1938, 1948, 1958, 1968 and 1978. By the end of the 2018-19 prep basketball season, the committee will have examined hundreds of names, and selected a total of 61 Retro Mr. Basketball winners. The basketball talent turned out by Michigan's high schools between 1920 and 1980 is incredible, and it's nice to stir up some conversation about these names from the past."

The ballots for each season are incredible, but the 1958 season can be pointed to as a year that included an especially rich array of talented ball players beside DeBusschere and Walker, including Chassell legend Don Mattson, East Lansing's Art Brandstatter and Ferndale's Earl McNeal. The committee's choice of Walker as the winner of the award is bound to get veteran basketball fans talking.

"That's my hope," said Pesch. "These guys deserve to be remembered and recalled. They truly represent Michigan's 'Legends of the Game.'"

PAST WINNERS OF BCAM'S RETRO MR. BASKETBALL AWARD

(College Attended Shown In Parenthesis)

1980 Tim McCormick, Clarkston (Michigan)

1977 Earvin "Magic" Johnson (Michigan State)

1976 Stuart House, Detroit Denby (Washington State)

1975 Bruce Flowers, Berkley (Notre Dame)

1974 Tony Smith, Saginaw (Nevada-Las Vegas)

1973 Tom LaGarde, Detroit Catholic Central (North Carolina)

1972 Larry Fogle, Detroit Cooley (Canisius)

1971 Michael "Campy" Russell, Pontiac Central (Michigan)

1970 Rick Drewitz, Garden City West (Kentucky)

1967 Spencer Haywood, Detroit Pershing (University of Detroit)

1966 Rudy Tomjanovich, Hamtramck (Michigan)

1965 L.C. Bowen, Benton Harbor (Bradley)

1964 Willie Betts, River Rouge (Bradley)

1963 Craig Dill, Saginaw Arthur Hill (Michigan)

1962 Ernie Thompson, Saginaw (Bradley)

1961 Reggie Harding, Detroit Eastern

1960 Peter Gent, Bangor (Michigan State)

1957 Ed Burton (Michigan State)

1956 Mel Peterson, Stephenson (Wheaton)

1955 M.C. Burton, Jr., Muskegon Heights (Michigan)

1954 Pete Tillotson, Ludington (Michigan)

1953 Ron Kramer, East Detroit (Michigan)

1952 Frank Tanana, Sr., Detroit St. Andrew

1951 Webster Kirksey, Saginaw (Eastern Michigan)

1950 Charlie Primas, Detroit Miller (Wayne State)

1947 Sammy Gee, Detroit Miller

1946 Jack Forestieri, Benton Harbor (Notre Dame)

1945 Bob Swanson, Lansing Sexton (Michigan)

1944 Dick Rifenburg, Saginaw Arthur Hill (Michigan)

1943 Don Boven, Kalamazoo Central (Western Michigan)

1942 Larry Savage, Saginaw (Northwestern)

1941 Don Osterman, Detroit St. Theresa (Villanova)

1940 Ralph Gibert, Flint Northern (Michigan)

1937 Bob Osterman, Detroit St. Theresa (Notre Dame)
1936 Charles Pink, Detroit Northwestern (Michigan)
1935 John Zwier, Holland Christian
1934 Earl Brown, Jr., Benton Harbor (Notre Dame)
1933 Lincoln Dodson Truss, Flint Northern
1932 Lowell Matteson, Portage
1931 Edward Huttenga, Grand Haven (Western Michigan)
1930 John Tooker, Kalamazoo St. Augustine (Michigan)

1927 Bill McCall, Muskegon (Dartmouth)
1926 Roger Grove, Sturgis (Michigan State)
1925 Joe Truskowski, Detroit Northeastern (Michigan)
1924 Bennie Oosterbaan, Muskegon (Michigan)
1923 Henry Schrumpf, Niles (Western Michigan)
1922 Royal Cherry, Grand Rapids Union (Michigan)
1921 George Haggarty, Ypsilanti (Michigan)
1920 Harry Kipke, Lansing Central (Michigan)

1928 RETRO MR. BASKETBALL

FRANCIS 'DINK' DOOLITTLE, DETROIT NORTHWESTERN.

"Although small of stature, Doolittle possesses a world of speed and cunning that more than overcomes this handicap," said the *Detroit Times* about Doolittle. "Under the new coach rule the captain was forced to direct the entire team during the progress of the game and made the part of captain a difficult role to fill," added the *Detroit Free Press*. According to all accounts, Doolittle excelled in the role.

1928 FINALISTS

Bob Ackerman, Bridgman.

Team captain, Ackerman led Bridgman to the first of back-to-back Class D state titles in 1927, scoring 20 points in the title game. The team's leading scorer in his junior year, Ackerman tallied 146 points during the regular season as a senior to again top the team.

Harold 'Hec' Dean, Port Huron.

An all-sports star at Port Huron, Dean was a stellar defender who led the basketball team to the semifinals of the state tournament. Inducted into the Port Huron Sports Hall of Fame in 1981.

DeForest Eveland, Detroit Northwestern.

"A dead shot when within the foul line...he can shoot well with both hands (and) he is a bear on defense, succeeding in keeping every man he has played against down to a minimum of points" said the *Free Press*. Later played basketball at the University of Michigan.

Harold Green, Detroit Northern.

"An uncanny shot," said the *Free Press*. "Six-feet tall and weighing 150 pounds, he has long arms and big hands with powerful fingers...six and seven baskets a game is his average." Played college ball at Michigan State.

Emmett O'Neill, Jackson.

A three-year varsity starter and team captain in his senior season, O'Neill was named all-state following the MHSAA tournament. Later played freshman basketball at the University of Michigan.

1938 RETRO MR. BASKETBALL

JOHN MAARTENS, KALAMAZOO CENTRAL, 6-FOOT-1, 165.

Honorary captain of the *Detroit Free Press* All-State team, Maartens was described as an “outstanding lanky left-handed forward, with specialty southpaw hook.” He scored 14 in Kalamazoo’s thrilling 29-27 championship game victory over Saginaw Arthur Hill. Rated the best forward in the strong Southwestern Conference. A strong baseball player, Maartens later earned a tryout with the St. Louis Cardinals, was a star in Kalamazoo area baseball for years, and was also considered one of the state’s top basketball referees.

1938 FINALISTS

Frank Mekules, Detroit Western, 6-foot-3, 202.

“The pivot man in Western’s attack but a good all-around floor man” according to the *Times*. Mekules scored 92 points in nine games for the Cowboys.

Stanley Paskiewicz, Saginaw, 6-foot-2, 192.

A fine ball handler, shooter, and rebounder, “and his floor work was almost flawless,” said the *Free Press* when naming him to their All-State team.

Henry Piatek, Detroit Catholic Central, 5-foot-11, 160.

Twice named to the *Detroit Times’* All-Catholic First Division team, Piatek was an excellent all-around athlete who also earned All-Catholic honors in football in the fall of his senior year. The Catholic League’s top scorer, he averaged 14 points a game this season and was considered the best forward in Detroit.

Bob Westfall, Ann Arbor, 5-foot-6, 170.

A star guard, Westfall led all Pioneer scorers during his senior season. Later starred on the football field at the University of Michigan.

1948 RETRO MR. BASKETBALL

ART McCOLGAN, SAGINAW SS PETER AND PAUL, 6-FOOT-3, 185.

Considered the state's most polished player at the time. "His pivot and backboard work sparked the Midgets" to a string of 52 straight victories and a 74-2 mark, including three consecutive trips to the Class C state championship game. As a senior, he tallied 548 points in 26 games, and finished with 1,443 points during his four seasons of play. Played freshman basketball at Michigan State, then two seasons of varsity at Villanova.

1948 FINALISTS

Vern Allen, Jackson, 5-foot-9, 135.

A two-time Detroit Free Press All-state selection, Allen was known for his "one-handed, off-balance shots" according to the Battle Creek Enquirer, and "his unorthodox shooting from all angles, his constant driving and uncanny passing...made Jackson a threat all season," stated Hal Schram in the *Free Press*. Allen scored 216 points in 17 games as a junior, then 345 points as a senior for an average of 14.9 per game.

Robert Carey, Charlevoix, 6-foot-5, 215.

Scored 351 points to lead the team in scoring as a junior, then posted 364 to again top the Rayders in scoring as a senior. "Between Bill and Bob (twin brothers), Charlevoix raced through its fourth straight undefeated...(regular) season this winter," according to the *Detroit Times*.

Blaine Denning, Detroit Northern, 6-foot-2, 175.

"Denning was the class of the players in the Metropolitan District which enjoyed one of its best basketball campaigns in years. He collected 207 points for the Eskimos, controlled both backboards and was at all times dangerous," said the *Times* when naming him to their all-state team.

Oscar Ingram, Flint Central, 6-foot-4, 190.

"The 6-foot-4 senior was the best rebound player in the state and placed second in the Saginaw Valley scoring race," noted the *Free Press*.

1958 RETRO MR. BASKETBALL

CHET WALKER, BENTON HARBOR, 6-FOOT-6, 199.

DT – “Walker was the big man in western Michigan this season. He had no superior when it came to rebounding, making it possible for the Harbor to enjoy virtual control of the offensive and defensive boards, said the *Detroit Times*. “From in close or on the outside he was impossible to stop.” The *Detroit Free Press* added: “Walker shouldered the scoring and rebounding pressure for Benton Harbor and kept the Tigers atop the *Free Press* ratings all season long.” Set new Benton Harbor records for points scored both in a season with 494 and in a career, with 1,080.

1958 FINALISTS

Art Brandstatter, East Lansing, 6-foot-1, 191.

DT - “Alternating between forward and guard, Brandstatter paced East Lansing to an unbeaten regular season. He had a sparkling 43 percent shooting average and just under 20 rebounds per game. He also was the team’s standout playmaker.”

Dave DeBusschere, Detroit Austin, 6-foot-5½, 191.

DeBusschere had a 27-point night in the Class A tournament finals in 1957 in a losing effort against Muskegon Heights, then scored 32 in Austin’s victory over Benton Harbor in the title game in 1958. Finished his senior season with 561 points. “In years to come, DeBusschere, an excellent rebounder and shot, will probably be bracketed...among the top tournament performers of all time,” said Schram in the *Free Press* when naming his All-State team.

Don Mattson, Chassell, 6-foot-1, 172.

“Thanks to Mattson, Chassell rolled on to a new all-time state prep record for most consecutive victories...Mattson’s play brought Chassell state ‘D’ titles the last two years. In his prep career Mattson has scored more than 1,500 points and has set a new U.P. record by playing 92 varsity games.”

Earl McNeal, Ferndale, 6-foot-1, 172.

“McNeal proved a proficient offensive feeder and playmaker,” said the *Free Press* when naming McNeal to their All-State team. “From outside the free throw circle his jump shot was deadly. He is quick, aggressive and smart.” McNeal averaged 16-points per game.

1968 RETRO MR. BASKETBALL

RALPH SIMPSON, DETROIT PERSHING, 6-FOOT-1, 190.

“Simpson was the big gun on (Coach) Will Robinson’s otherwise mediocre club,” said the Associated Press. “He averaged 36 points, 12.6 rebounds and 3.4 assists a game before the defending Class A champion Doughboys were eliminated in the district tournament.” A Parade first team All-American, he was also United Press International’s ‘Player of the Year’.

1968 FINALISTS

Stan Grayson, Detroit All Saints, 6-foot-4, 200.

According to the Associated Press, Grayson “led the Saints to the runner-up spot in the state tournament last year and carried the team all the way to the championship this season. Grayson averaged 25 points and 18 rebounds this year and the Saints rolled to an undefeated season with 26 straight victories.” Headed to Holy Cross after high school.

Ron Gutkowski, Detroit Catholic Central, 6-foot-6, 200.

“Averaged 26 points and 15 rebounds a game as Catholic Central swept to the semifinals of this year’s tournament, said the AP. “He hit 50 percent of his floor shots.” Later played for Michigan State.

Pat Miller, Menominee, 6-foot-4, 185.

“One of the finest players to come out of the U.P. in years,” said the UPI when naming Miller All-State. “Scored more than 1,500 points in his three-year varsity career and retrieved better than 1,000 rebounds.” The Associated Press added, “Miller, who holds every Menominee scoring record, averaged 25.2 points per game on a 48.8 percent floor shooting average. He had only 20 fouls in his first 16 games.”

John Sperla, Flint St. Matthew, 5-foot-11,

“Paced Flint St. Matthew to back-to-back state titles,” said Richard Shook, writing for UPI. “Broke the Flint city scoring record by swishing 830 points in 25 games for an average of 33.3 per game. He hit double figures for 48 consecutive contests and in one four-game stretch, tallied 41-43-42 and 44 points during the tournament. He hit 36 in the championship game...and was also the team’s leading rebounder.”

1978 RETRO MR. BASKETBALL

TRENT TUCKER, FLINT NORTHWESTERN, 6-FOOT-5, 190.

“Broke all of Flint’s city scoring records, including most points in a season with 608 for a 23 game average of 26.4,” wrote Phil Pierson of the *Flint Journal* for the Associated Press. “His high game was a record 49 points and he closed his career with 1,294 points for an average of 18.2 in 71 games.”

1978 FINALISTS

Gerald Busby, Buchanan, 6-foot-4, 170.

“Busby was the star of the Class C division, said the *Free Press*. “The 6-4 Buchanan ace is probably the second-most-sought-after senior in the state.” John VandenHeed of the *Benton Harbor Herald Palladium* added, “Helped Buchanan...post an impressive 76-7 record in his three years on the varsity. He took his area’s individual scoring championship as a junior and ended up with 1,574 career points.” Moved from forward to guard during his senior season and still averaged 21.7 points per game.

Rob Gonzalez, Detroit Catholic Central, 6-foot-7, 200.

“Averaged 26.5 points and 12 rebounds with a high of 48 points against Class B state champion Muskegon Heights,” said the Associated Press.

Walker D. Russell, Pontiac Central, 6-foot-4, 200.

“He was the consistent scorer, rebounder and leader on a team which had very little size,” said Hal Schram of the *Free Press*. “Russell is a gifted all-around performer,” added the Associated Press. “He scored big when necessary, getting 36 points against Saginaw, made 53 percent of his shots and averaged 12 rebounds and five assists while leading Pontiac to the finals of the state tournament.”

Keith Smith, Detroit Mackenzie, 6-foot-0, 150.

“Smith ran the show for a Mackenzie team that reached the quarterfinals in the state tournament,” said Pierson in his AP All-State write-up. “While averaging 21 points, (he) handed out an amazing 14 assists a game, many of them coming because of his ability to penetrate inside before passing to a teammate.”