

2019 Michigan Mr. Basketball: New Haven's Romeo Weems

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Three years ago, New Haven basketball coach Tedaro France thought it was possible for his young phenom to be a Mr. Basketball candidate.

“I knew when he was a freshman that if he stayed here all four years he’d have a chance for this,” France said. “I knew then he had the talent and the potential and the drive and the work ethic to be special.”

A year later, France realized that sophomore Romeo Weems was a dead solid lock to be the 2019 Mr. Basketball.

“I knew his sophomore year when we won the state title and he had a huge, huge game in the state championship game,” France said.

“The next morning he called me to let him in the gym. I knew right then that this kid is not content with just being good, he wanted to be great. I knew that with his drive and how hard he works that he was going to do it.”

Weems did it all right.

But Weems didn’t just win the award, he turned this year’s race into an avalanche. He accumulated 3,689 points, easily outdistancing Canton’s B. Artis White, who finished second with 1,798 points. Chandler Turner of Detroit Renaissance was third (1,520 points) and Westland Glenn’s Joe Moon V was fourth (1,372). Weems garnered 653 first-place votes, which were 375 more first-place votes than the other three finalists combined.



It was the widest margin of victory in the history of the award, [surpassing 1,457-point margin U-D Jesuit's Cassius Winston won by in 2016.](#)

The 6-foot-7 Weems was taken aback by many of the names of former winners on the trophy, including Shane Battier, Winston, Chris Webber, Monte Morris, Jason Richardson and Foster Loyer.

"It means a lot," he said. "They're some of the best players to ever come through here. It was a great accomplishment that I can become one of them some day."

He has been a dominating force at both ends of the court. This season he is averaging 27.8 points, 11.4 rebounds, 3.8 assists, 4.2 steals and 2.6 blocks per game. He has scored a school-record 2,124 career points.

Over the course of the last couple of years, Weems has had the opportunity to leave the state to attend a prep school like so many other have chosen to do in recent years.

[But that seemed like a foolish path to Weems.](#)



New Haven H.S. senior Romeo Weems with the Hal Schram Mr. Basketball trophy Monday, March 11, 2019 in Detroit, Mich. (Photo: Kirthmon F. Dozier, Detroit Free Press)

“It’s for more exposure,” he said. “I’ve got exposure, but it’s just that more people will know you around the country. I really had that. I was already committed to college and I didn’t really need anything. I just figured I’d stay, stay loyal to my coach.”

As a freshman, Weems became aware of the Mr. Basketball award and it became a main focus for him a year later after New Haven won the Class B state title.

“Ever since sophomore year, I felt I was able to get it,” he said. “We won the state championship and I felt I was playing well stats-wise and we were winning and I felt I was a big part of that and I could win it one year.”

In that championship game, a 45-36 victory over Ludington, Weems hit 5 of 6 shots, including his only 3-point attempt, and 8 of 11 free throws for 19 points. He also added 10 rebounds, four blocked shots and three steals.

The next morning, he had France on the phone, attempting to get into the school gym.

“He said he didn’t think he played that good,” France recalled, “so he wanted to work on a few things.”

Weems has no recollection of that call probably because it was one of hundreds he has made to France over his career.

After scoring 47 points in a game in the middle of this season, Weems was in the gym with France the following morning at 5 a.m.



New Haven High School player Romeo Weems (1) jumps to dunk the ball during the MHSAA Class B basketball semifinals against Grand Rapids Catholic Central at the Breslin Center in East Lansing Friday, March 23. (Photo: Brian M. Wells/Times Herald)

Late last week, France told Weems he was Mr. Basketball. A soft-spoken youngster, Weems didn't say much, but asked to sit down. "He kind of broke down," France said. "[This was a goal of his that he wanted to get.](#) To him it means so much to be named one of the best players here in this great state that has a rich basketball tradition. To be a part of that, he was so excited and not just for himself, but for his teammates and this school and this county."

Between his junior and senior year, Weems, the first player from Macomb County to win the award, zeroed in on a couple of areas of his game he thought he needed to improve upon to become Mr. Basketball.

"My shot improved," he said, "and my ball handling and decision-making has been better.

"I'm just blessed to get it."

Al Snyder, chairperson for the Mr. Basketball award, has been impressed with Weems for three years now and nothing changed when he saw him help New Haven win the regional title last week.

New Haven H.S. senior Romeo Weems poses with teammates after receiving the Hal Schram Mr. Basketball award Monday, March 11, 2019 in Detroit, Mich. (Photo: Kirthmon F. Dozier, Detroit Free Press)

“He wasn’t sharp so what he became was a great team player,” Snyder said. “He gives them the ball and all of a sudden he’ll get a slam dunk or hit a shot. He plays hard. He had 12 or 13 rebounds and half a dozen blocks shots and a half dozen assists. “I left knowing, without a doubt, he’s the No. 1 player in the state. There is no doubt he is Mr. Basketball.”

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The voting

Here are the results of the 39th annual Hal Schram Mr. Basketball award, given by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan. Only BCAM members are permitted to vote (Points are awarded on a 5-3-1 basis):

1. Romeo Weems, New Haven: 3,689 points
2. B. Artis White, Canton: 1,798 points
3. Chandler Turner, Detroit Renaissance: 1,520 points
4. Joe Moon IV, Westland Glenn: 1,372 points



New Haven's Romeo Weems claps during the first quarter of the Class B MHSAA semifinals against Grand Rapids CC on Friday, March 23, 2018, at the Breslin Center in East Lansing. (Photo: Kirthmon F. Dozier, Detroit Free Press)

Welcome to the club