

2021 Michigan Mr. Basketball: Detroit Douglass' Pierre Brooks II



High Schools Insider
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Special to Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

It was Wednesday evening, four days after father and son had helped Detroit Douglass claim the Division 4 state championship when Pierre Sr. and his wife, Inger, called a family meeting.

Pierre Brooks II and his younger brother, Joshua, II, and sister, Laila 7, sat down in the living room and waited for their father to address them.

"You're about to have another little sister," he told them.

Now that caught everyone by surprise.

"Pierre was pretty mad about it," Brooks Sr. said, "but my baby girl was pretty excited to have a little sister. Pierre probably thought he was going to have to babysit or something."

But Pierre Sr. couldn't keep a straight face for long.

"No," he said, laughing. "You're Mr. Basketball."

Pierre II, 6 feet 6, leapt off the couch and gave his father, also 6-6, an enthusiastic chest bump that may have registered a 5.0 on the Richter scale.

(The house suffered no apparent structural damage.)

"We shared a lot of emotion," Brooks II said. "It feels like the state has recognized me in a great way. We were both amazed."

Brooks was introduced Friday as the 41st winner of the Hal Schram Mr. Basketball award, given annually to the state's top senior by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan.

A Michigan State signee, Brooks compiled 2,889 points, edging Iron Mountain's Foster Wonders (2,573 points), Kobe Bufkin of Grand Rapids Christian (2,143), Julian Roper II of Orchard Lake St. Mary's (1,668) and River Rouge's Legend Geeter (1,410).

Of the 1,187 votes cast before the semifinals, Brooks accumulated 383 first-place votes and Wonders had 339.

In a spectacular senior season, Brooks averaged 33.1 points and 9.3 rebounds in leading Douglass to the state title.

He began the season ranked the No. 1 player in the state, but a few years ago it would have been difficult for anyone to watch Brooks play and imagine they were looking at a future Mr. Basketball.

And the younger Brooks would have agreed with them.

"Here's the thing," he said, cutting to the chase. "My sixth grade year I wasn't really good. I was more of a strictly shooter. All I did was shoot the basketball. I didn't really have any physical tools."

Brooks was playing for the Family at the time, the highest profile AAU team in the state.

During the tryout phase, one coach was blunt with Brooks.

"Man, go play with the younger kids," he said. "You'll get some more run with them."

Making it worse, the coach said it in front of his teammates and their parents.

Brooks was heartbroken and he wasn't alone. He loved playing basketball, but he had been cut by one of the state's better AAU programs.

"I went home crying to my dad and my mom," he said. "I felt mad, frustrated."

If Brooks was looking for sympathy at home, he didn't find much.

"Let's get to work," is all his father said, not wanting his son wallow in self-pity.

"On the inside, it hurt," his father said.

Fortunately, Keon Henderson always thought the younger Brooks had a lot of potential and after Brooks was cut, Henderson asked him to join the REACH Doughboys.

"He really saw something in Pierre," his father said. "He instilled a lot of confidence in Pierre, especially with his shooting and getting his ball handling together."

But most of all, it was Brooks who took it upon himself to prove the Family coaches wrong.

"Ever since then, I wanted to work," he said. "The next day, I put in a lot of hours and ever since then I've been doing a lot of work."

Brooks played well that summer, but then did a surprising thing. He went back to the Family and tried out again.

Most players who were cut would avoid the team that cut them like the plague.

"I definitely could have said that for sure," Brooks said. "But me and my dad believed



Pierre Brooks II with the Hal Schram Mr. Basketball trophy on Friday at Detroit Douglass High School. KIRTHMON F. DOZIER/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Count 'em up

Here are the results of the 41st annual Hal Schram Mr. Basketball award, given by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan.

Only BCAM members are permitted to vote:

RK	PLAYER	SCHOOL	PTS
1	Pierre Brooks II	Detroit Douglass	2,889
2	Foster Wonders	Iron Mountain	2,573
3	Kobe Bufkin	Grand Rapids Christian	2,143
4	Julian Roper II	Orchard Lake St. Mary's	1,668
5	Legend Geeter	River Rouge	1,410

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

that we wanted to succeed on the Nike circuit. The highest level was important, so going back to the Family and not giving up was the best option."

Brooks made the Family team that year and he has been a big-time player ever since, giving his father the idea that he may be coaching a future Mr. Basketball.

"I want to say we thought he'd have shot at it in his ninth-grade year," his father said. "It was based on his playing AAU with all of the top players who were on that team. He always kind of established himself as one of the top players once he got to school."

But there are a lot of players who mature early and are phenoms as freshmen and sophomores. More often than not, they eventually hit a plateau in their improvement and are caught by other players in their class.

That never happened with Brooks, whose development has been steady throughout high school.

"His level of improvement every year, he got better at something each year," his father said. "His ninth-grade year, he was a little immature on the basketball court and would get frustrated real easy. We really worked on that in terms of being mentally tough, mentally strong and taking coaching."

"Going into his 11th grade year we wanted him to get faster, stronger so he really dedicated himself to going into the weight room, running on the track. This year, he was just self-motivated. It was not having to tell him it was time to get up shots. He's really been self-motivated to get better and take more of a leadership role."

Brooks had three memorable plays in the state championship game. One was a tomahawk dunk that he threw down with a degree of ferocity.

The second was a 3-point basket from the middle of the MSU logo, at nearly half court in the final seconds of the second quarter.

And this was no desperation heave. Brooks used the same shooting motion he uses on all of his jump shots.

This one was a bit deeper than any other shot taken by anyone that weekend.

After the game, he was asked what he will bring to MSU and he mentioned shooting range.

Asked if MSU coach Tom Izzo will allow him more logo shots he replied: Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no.

"But if the shot clock is down to 1 and I'm out there, I have no problems letting fly."

Then there was the play in the fourth quarter when Douglass was clinging to a four-point lead when one of Wyoming Park Tri-unity Christian's players broke into the open for what should have been an uncontested layup.

But seemingly out of nowhere Brooks came racing down the court like a runaway locomotive, sprinting toward the basket and he some-

Michigan Mr. Basketball through the years

Here are the 41 winners of the Hal Schram Mr. Basketball Award:

- 2021: Pierre Brooks II, Detroit Douglass (Michigan State)
- 2020: Carlos (Scooby) Johnson, Benton Harbor (Butler)
- 2019: Romeo Weems, New Haven (DePaul)
- 2018: Foster Loyer, Clarkston (Michigan State)
- 2017: Isaiah Livers, Kalamazoo Central (Michigan)
- 2016: Cassius Winston, U-D Jesuit (Michigan State)
- 2015: Deyonta Davis, Muskegon (Michigan State)
- 2014: DeShawn Thrower, Muskegon (Stony Brook/Ferris State)
- 2013: Monte Morris, Flint Beecher (Iowa State)
- 2012: Matt Costello, Bay City Western (Michigan State)
- 2011: Dwaun Anderson, Suttons Bay (Wagner)
- 2010: Keith Appling, Detroit Pershing (Michigan State)
- 2009: Derrick Nix, Detroit Pershing (Michigan State)
- 2008: Brad Redford, Frankenmuth (Xavier)
- 2007: Corperryale (Manny) Harris, Detroit Redford (Michigan)
- 2006: David Kool, Grand Rapids South Christian (Western Michigan)
- 2005: Wilson Chandler, Benton Harbor (DePaul)
- 2004: Drew Neitzel, Wyoming Park (Michigan State)
- 2003: Dion Harris, Detroit Redford (Michigan)
- 2002: Paul Davis, Rochester (Michigan State)
- 2001: Kelvin Torbert, Flint Northwestern (Michigan State)
- 2000: Marcus Taylor, Lansing Waverly (Michigan State)
- 1999: Jason Richardson, Saginaw Arthur Hill (Michigan State)
- 1998: Dane Fife, Clarkston (Indiana)
- 1997: Shane Battier, Birmingham Detroit Country Day (Duke)
- 1996: Winfred Walton, Detroit Pershing (Syracuse/Fresno State)
- 1995: Robert Traylor, Detroit Murray-Wright (Michigan)
- 1994: Willie Mitchell, Detroit Pershing (Michigan/UAB)
- 1993: Jon Garavaglia, Southgate Aquinas (Michigan State)
- 1992: Kenyon Murray, Battle Creek Central (Iowa)
- 1991: Chris Webber, Birmingham Detroit Country Day (Michigan)
- 1990: Anthony Miller, Detroit Cooley (Michigan State)
- 1989: Michael Talley, Detroit Cooley (Michigan)
- 1988: Matt Steigenga, Grand Rapids South Christian (Michigan State)
- 1987: Mark Macon, Saginaw Buena Vista (Temple)
- 1986: Terry Mills, Romulus (Michigan)
- 1985: Glen Rice, Flint Northwestern (Michigan)
- 1984: Demetres Gore, Detroit Chadsey (Pittsburgh)
- 1983: Antoine Joubert, Detroit Southwestern (Michigan)
- 1982: Robert Henderson, Lansing Eastern (Michigan)
- 1981: Sam Vincent, Lansing Eastern (Michigan State)

how made a clean block, keeping it a two-possession game.

It was nothing more than a pure all-out effort play in winning time.

"It was like a will to win," he said. "It was just having the presence of mind to not let the other team score. It's something I do on a regular basis."

It has become a regular basis ever since that day he was cut from that AAU team some seven years ago.

"I still think about that when I'm playing," Brooks said. "I'm like, I've still got something to prove. That's why I always play with a chip on my shoulder."

Mick McCabe is a former longtime columnist for the Detroit Free Press. Contact him at mickmccabell@gmail.com. Follow him on Twitter @mickmccabell. Save \$10 on his new book, "Mick McCabe's Golden Yearbook: 50 Great Years of Michigan's Best High School Players, Teams & Memories," by ordering right now at McCabe.PictorialBook.com.