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Area students are finalists for MHSAA scholarship

The 120 finalists for the 2011-12 Michigan High School Athletic Association's Scholar-Athlete Award have been announced, and six of those student-athletes attend schools in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area.

Five of the half dozen local students who are now eligible for the \$1,000 scholarship are from Class A schools, including Nick Rao and Christopher Sesi from Birmingham Brother Rice, Blaine Stannard and Jessica Turner from Birmingham Groves, and Kelly Lunghamer from Birmingham Marian.

The other finalist is Isabella Yzerman from the Bloomfield Hills Academy of the Sacred Heart — a Class C school.

The program, which has been recognizing student-athletes since the 1989-90 school year, will honor 32 individuals from MHSAA member schools who participate in at least one sport in which the Association sponsors a postseason tournament.

Farm Bureau Insurance underwrites the Scholar-Athlete Award, and will present the \$1,000 scholarship to each recipient. Since the beginning of the program, 544 scholarships have been awarded.

Scholarships will be presented proportionately by school classification, with 12 scholarships to be awarded to Class A student-athletes, six female and six male; eight scholarships will be awarded to Class B student-athletes, four female and four male; six scholarships will be awarded to Class C student-athletes, three female and three male; and four scholarships will be awarded to Class D student-athletes, two female and two male.

In addition, there also will be two at-large honorees which also are part of the general judging process, may come from any classification, and are designated by their school at the time of entry.

Every MHSAA member high school could submit as many applications as there are scholarships available in its classification, and could have more than one finalist. Brother Rice and Groves are among 20 schools statewide with at least two finalists.

Multiple-sport participation remains the norm among applicants.

The average sport participation rate of the finalists is 2.58, while the average of the application pool was 2.13 — both within a tenth of last year's rates in those categories. There are 66 three-plus sport participants in the finalist field, and all but three of the 28 sports in which the MHSAA sponsors postseason tournaments are represented.

Of 386 schools which submitted applicants, 51 submitted the maximum allowed. This year, 1,636 applications were received. All will be presented with certificates commemorating their achievement.

The applications were judged by a 62-member committee of school coaches, counselors, faculty members, administrators and board members from MHSAA member schools.

Selection of the 32 scholarship recipients will take place in early February. Class C and D scholarship recipients will be announced on Feb. 7; Class B scholarship recipients will be announced on Feb. 14, and Class A scholarship recipients will be announced on Feb. 21. All announcements will be made on the MHSAA Web site. To honor the 32 Scholar-Athlete Award recipients, a ceremony will take place during halftime of the Class C Boys Basketball Final, March 24, at the Breslin Student Events Center in East Lansing.

To be eligible for the award, students must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.50 (on a 4.0 scale), and previously have won a varsity letter in at least one sport in which the MHSAA sponsors a postseason tournament. Students also were asked to respond to a series of short essay questions, submit two letters of recommendation and submit a 500-word essay on the importance of sportsmanship in educational athletics.

A total of 62 student-athletes from the Birmingham-Bloomfield and South Oakland areas were nominated for the award by their schools. Seaholm and Groves in Class A (12) and Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood in Class B (8) each had the maximum amount of nominees in their respective classes.

Following are the area nominees (listed by schools):

BERKLEY: Jacob Duchan; Daniel Fryc; Caitlin O'Neill; Nathan A Vertel.

BIRMINGHAM BROTHER RICE: Thomas Davey Girardot; Nick Rao; Christopher Sesi; John Douglas Way II.

BIRMINGHAM GROVES: Jacob Balicki; Keon Lee Collier; Justice Echols; Scott Feist; Sarah Garcia; John Hammond; Courtney Howe; Blake Jackson; Lucy Mailing; Keely Nowland; Blaine Stannard; Jessica Turner.

BIRMINGHAM MARIAN: Alexa Finger; Emma Gaboury; Kelly Lunghamer; Jaynie Pulte; Halle Robinson.

BIRMINGHAM SEAHOLM: Daniel Jonathan Bekemeyer; David Andrew Bender; Emma Louise Coury; Reid Michael Davison; Colin Michael Finley; Kelly Anne Frazier; Genevieve Ines Gagnier; Ann Katherine Grier; Nolan Michael McPartlin; Jacob Evan Plotnik; Caroline Dagne Quigley; Kristen Marie Thut.

BLOOMFIELD HILLS ACADEMY OF THE SACRED HEART: Angelique White; Isabella Yzerman.

BLOOMFIELD HILLS ANDOVER: Mark Andonian; Jarred Bratley; Michael Calvas; Lise Devits; Max Elder; Nicholas Shabino; Alexis Sinclair.

BLOOMFIELD HILLS CRANBROOK-KINGSWOOD: Andrew Georgeson; Claire Huttenlocher; Molly Laubernds; Charles Morrow; Elliot Rosenfeld; Amanda Schimpke; Megan Simmons; Stefan Withrow.

BLOOMFIELD HILLS LAHSER: Athena Antonis; Lindsey Ferguson; Neal Krentz.

DETROIT COUNTRY DAY: Maria Buczkowski.

FERNDAL: Tirzah Ashmore; Brandon Davis; Rachel Dery.

SOUTHFIELD CHRISTIAN: Kyle Bivins.

Additional Facts

2011-12 Scholar-Athlete Area Award Finalists

Boys Class A: Nick Rao (Birmingham Brother Rice); Christopher Sesi (Birmingham Brother Rice: Blaine Stannard (Birmingham Groves).

Girls Class A: Kelly Lunghamer (Birmingham Marian); Jessica Turner (Birmingham Groves).

Girls Class C: Isabella Yzerman (Bloomfield Hills Academy of the Sacred Heart).
