

Pershing still the team to beat

Tom Markowski / The Detroit News

Gone is Mr. Basketball [Derrick Nix](#). Also gone are three others who started in the Class A final last season. Detroit Pershing will miss those players, but what it's not missing is the aggressive style of play and the intensity coach A.W. Canada demands. Pershing, 26-1 a season ago, will be a different team without the hefty Nix in the middle and his physical twin, backup Tevon Conrad. Pershing always has been a team that likes to run, even with a 300-pound center. This year's team will be trimmed down and hungry for another title. We don't have the space-eaters," Canada said. "We'll be quicker. We should be. But there's a bunch of question marks." What concerns Canada most is the inexperience. [Keith Appling](#) and Juwan Howard Jr. are returning senior starters and senior Dwayne Hudson played considerably as a reserve. But past that, varsity experience is limited to a few minutes a game for players such as Sherron Dorsey-Walker and Shawntez Williams, both of whom played as freshmen, and seniors Kiedez Foster and Raymoan McAfee. Canada will rely on McAfee, a sleek 6-foot-7 post player, to block and ignite the transition game. Appling (Michigan State) and Howard (Western Michigan) will be counted on to carry the scoring load. Hudson is a slick ballhandler and Dorsey-Walker, a 6-3 wing-post player, is the next rising star.

2. Kalamazoo Central Class A, 25-2 Central lost in the state final, but returns three starters, led by **Devin Oliver** (6-7). Junior **T.J. Buchanan** (6-3) averaged 10 points in the postseason. Junior **Darius Norman** (6-6) is an [athletic](#) power forward and junior **DeQuavion McCants-Wilson** (5-10) will man the point.

3. Detroit Country Day Class B, 22-2 One starter returns, senior PG **Ray McCallum Jr.**, but he's one of the best. And Country Day's junior class is one of the best led by 6-10 C **Amir Williams**. Country Day will use a three-guard offense and be quicker. **Chris Fowler** (6-1) and **Lee Bailey** (5-11) will help energize the fast-paced game coach **Kurt Keener** directs.

4. Flint Powers Class B, 26-2 The defending Class B champion returns three starters but will be young. Junior **Patrick Lucas-Perry** (5-11) is the top in his class. **Patrick O'Brien** (6-4) is a three-year starter and **DeMarco Sanders** (6-1) is a fine perimeter shooter. Sophomore **Javontae Hawkins** (6-5) transferred and will be eligible in January. **5.**

Detroit Southeastern Class A, 20-4 **George Ward** takes over and said his junior class, led by **Brandan Kearney** (6-6) and **Percy Gibson** (6-7), is the best in the state. PG **Carlos Carter** (5-11), the lone senior starter, is back. **Landon Gray** (6-3) and **William Washington** (6-4) will start and C **Devonte Carter** (6-0) could start at times. Freshman **Kenyatta Singleton** (6-0) is a top reserve.

6. Saginaw Arthur Hill Class A, 20-3 **Maurice Jones** (5-7) is one of three starters back. **Jordan Hare** (6-9) is one of the state's top sophomores and senior **Tyler Dwyer** (6-4) averaged eight points. Senior transfer **Freddie Harvey** (5-9) will provide backcourt help and senior **Quincy Tucker** (6-5) could start.

7. Holt Class A, 19-6 Three starters return from a team that reached the regional finals. **Cole Darling**, a 6-7 post player, can score and is a good shot-blocker. **Donlunto Jackson** (5-8) is a four-year starter at the point and senior **Dominick Todd** (5-11) adds toughness. Junior **Tim Scott** (6-2), a transfer, could start.

8. Romulus Class A, 21-6 Senior **DeAndray Buckley** (6-4) is the lone starter returning, but junior transfer **Justin Moss** (6-6) will help inside. Junior **Derrick Stephens** (5-8) will start at the point. Seniors **Derrick Stewart** (5-9), a good perimeter shooter, and **Marcus Trent** (6-2) are the other starters.

9. Inkster Class A, 24-2 Inkster reached the Class B semifinals and returns six of its top seven, led by **Deon Butler** (6-3) and **Jerry Jones** (6-4). Junior transfer **Deon Stegall** (5-11) will be eligible in January. **Jonathon Taylor** (6-2) is another returning starter. Senior post player **Orlando Sickling** (6-6) likely will start.

10. Ann Arbor Huron Class A, 20-3 Four starters return, all juniors, from a team that lost in the regional semifinals. **A.J. Mathew** (6-3) is a pass-first point guard who averaged 14 points. **Donte Williams** (6-6) plays the [shooting guard](#) and **Matt Hastings** (6-3) is the top 3-point shooter. **Kyle Baker** (6-4) is a shot-blocker.

The next 20

Saginaw (13-8), A

Detroit Cass Tech (12-7), A

Lansing Eastern (13-8), A

Clarkston (24-2), A

Melvindale Advanced Business & Tech* (25-2), C

Detroit Denby (1-17), A

East Grand Rapids (19-6), B

Bridgeport (23-3), B

Rockford (22-3), A

Southfield (11-11), A

Okemos (21-3), A

Detroit King (7-11), A

Southfield-Lathrup (12-12), A

Detroit Osborn (6-11), A

Jackson (14-9), A

Detroit Henry Ford (19-4), A

Sexton (16-5), B:

Mt. Pleasant (15-9), A:

Flint Carman-Ainsworth (12-9), A

Ann Arbor Richard (22-3), B