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Boys Basketball Player of the Year: Bailey Does it All for McEachern

By Liam Dreesen MDJ Sports Writer
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Special - Cecil Copeland

Before moving on to Rutgers in the fall, McEachern's Ace Bailey made sure to go out with a bang, averaging more than 33.4 points, 15.5 rebounds and earning a long list of awards as the nation's No. 2-ranked recruit.

Ace Bailey is one of the 10 best players to ever come out of Georgia according to McEachern boys basketball coach Tremayne Anchrum Sr.

Bailey backed up that bold statement this past season by earning numerous awards and honors — including being named Georgia's Mr. Basketball and the MaxPreps Georgia Player of the Year. He was also a finalist for the Naismith and the MaxPreps National

Player of the Year, a McDonald's All-American and helped McEachern advance to the Class AAAAAAA state championship game.

Now, Bailey can add Cobb County Boys Basketball Player of the Year to the list.

In January, Bailey told the MDJ that the work he put in during the offseason helped the game really slow down for him, and it was helping him see the floor better and read things much quicker.

That offseason work helped the 6-foot-8 wing average 33.4 points, 15.5 rebounds, 3.9 assists and 2.1 blocks per game, which helped lead McEachern to its best season in five years. The Indians finished 26-6 and won the Region 3AAAAAAA title.

Bailey said a conversation with Anchrum early in the season helped him realize there were times he had to be able to take over a game.

It led to performances against some of the best teams in the country over Christmas break, in which Bailey averaged 33 points and 16.4 rebounds a game against the likes of Don Bosco Prep (N.J.), Westminster Academy (Fla.), Cannon (N.C.) and Camden (N.J.).

Bailey maintained his pace through the playoffs, when he had 33 points and 14 rebounds in come-from-behind victory against Newton in the second round, 33 points and 16 rebounds against Norcross in the quarterfinals and 32 points and 15 rebounds in the semifinals against Wheeler.

Bailey, who ranked as the No. 2 overall recruit by 247Sports, signed with Rutgers in November.

“He’s one of those players that only comes around once every 10 years,” Anchrum said.

Anchrum said he and Bailey developed a strong bond during their three years together at McEachern.

“I love the journey we have had with Ace the past three years, and watching him grow.” Anchrum said.

Anchrum said Bailey made improvements as both a player and leader while at McEachern, developing from a supremely talented sophomore to a team captain, and Anchrum added Bailey had become a great leader in the locker room — aiding the development of younger players.

“He’s the ultimate teammate and ultimate player that a coach wants.” Anchrum said.

Cobb County Boys All-County Basketball Team

Player of the Year

Ace Bailey, McEachern

Coach of the Year

Jermaine Sellers, Kell

First Team

Ace Bailey, McEachern

Nnadozie Onyirimba, McEachern

CJ Brown, Kell

Jaylen Colon, Kell

Fe’Royre High, Campbell

Caleb Thomas, Pebblebrook

Luke Flynn, Walton

Ricky McKenzie, Wheeler

Zach Bleshoy, Pope

Moustapha Diop, Walker

Second Team

Jordan Howe, Harrison

Jaye Nash, McEachern

Caesar Burrows, Walton

JP Wells, Walton

Josh Hill, Wheeler

Kota Suttle, Wheeler

Miles George, Sprayberry

Gabe Bolden, N. Cobb Christian

Marquan Murray, Hillgrove

Keyshawn Dickey, Marietta

Honorable Mention

Allatoona: Ben Karanja, Dean Soulsby

Campbell: Jaelen Cheaves, Rhys Cotton, Sharif Mosely, Kaylan Roberson

Harrison: Will Smith

Hillgrove: Elijah Mayes, Shawn Smith

Kell: Chris McLavish

Kennesaw Mountain: Gabe Jackson-Mallett

Lassiter: Aidyn Davis, Jaden Emmanuelli, Cal Liston, Kyhir Torrence

Marietta: Jackson Bourgeois **McEachern:** Jayden Bynes **Mount Bethel Christian:** Cole Buker, Will Kuimjian, Zach Rodene

Mount Paran Christian: Carter Galbreath, Chris Park

North Cobb Christian: Brock Bass-Bonner, Grant Robich

Osborne: Omari Chaudhry, Hakeem Weems

Pebblebrook: Arthur Williams

Pope: Drew Abney, Deven Royal

Sprayberry: Jorden Edmonds **Walker:** Anderson Carey, Noah Pederson

Walton: Kaeden Gilstrap, Khamani Paxton

Whitefield Academy: Lofton Brown, Will Holland