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Cadillac's Ben Simons is Class B player of year

3/26/2009, 6:30 a.m. EDT

By RON MONTRI

The Associated Press

MONROE, Mich. (AP) — Cadillac is usually a little off the beaten path for college basketball recruiters.

Ben Simons changed that.

The 6-foot-8 senior averaged 29.1 points per game this season and caught the eye of recruiters from all over the country.

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Utah, Providence, Baylor, Drake and Santa Clara all showed interest. Michigan State coach Tom Izzo came to a practice. Most of the Mid-American Conference schools joined the recruiting process.

Simons also caught the attention of the 11-member Associated Press All-State panel, which selected him as the Class B Player of the Year.

Simons is a wing player who is on the thin side at 190 pounds, but he is an exceptional shooter and topped the 20-point mark in 18 of Cadillac's 21 games. His best night was 44 points.

"He never had an off shooting night. His low game was 15," Cadillac coach Jeff McDonald said. "He's very smooth. He's a perimeter player and settled for jump shots earlier in his career. This year he made a big improvement in taking the ball to the basket."

Simons made 53 3-pointers and hit 82 percent of his free throws this season. He scored 1,328 points during his three-year career and has signed with Drake.

The Class B All-State list also includes Donnavan Kirk and Ray McCallum Jr. of top-ranked Detroit Country Day, Eso Akunne of Ann Arbor Gabriel Richard, Nic Jobe of Ida, Ricarri Stimage of Muskegon Heights, Corey Vandussen of Zeeland East, Duke Mondy of Grand Rapids Catholic Central, Shane Moreland of Flint Powers Catholic, Drew Valentine of Lansing Sexton and Austin Nichols of Lansing Catholic Central.

McCallum is the son of University of Detroit Mercy coach Ray McCallum and made a major impact in his first season at Country Day. The 6-1 junior averaged 17 points and six assists while shooting 57 percent from the floor.

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