

Three Grind Session Stars Tabbed as Naismith High School Player of the Year Semifinalists

AJ Dybantsa, Darryn Peterson, and Mikel Brown, Jr. still have a month to make their case for the prestigious award, which will be presented on March 7.

BENTON, KY, UNITED STATES, February 11, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Three of the 10 semifinalists for the 2025 Naismith Boy's High School Player of the Year award – AJ Dybantsa, Darryn Peterson, and Mikel Brown, Jr. – come by way of the [Grind Session](#), the longest-running winter circuit of prep basketball events in North America.



To put into perspective just how good the Grind Session is: the circuit has produced over 3,000 players who have gone on to play collegiate or professional basketball, including more than 20 first-round NBA draft picks. That list includes two recent NBA champions in Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray and Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum

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All three of these exceptional young men are incredibly deserving to be honored with the Jersey Mike's Naismith High School Trophy as Player of the Year.”

Scott Waldrup

“In a highly competitive and thrilling basketball season, all three of these exceptional young men are deserving to be honored with the Jersey Mike's Naismith High School Trophy as Player of the Year,” said Grind Session co-founder and CEO Scott Waldrup. “It has been our pleasure to watch them showcase their skills on our circuit, and we're excited to watch their careers continue to thrive -

now and at the next level.”

• AJ DYBANTSA: THE NATION'S #1 PLAYER

Dybantsa, who previously played for [Prolific Prep](#) before transferring to [Utah Prep](#) last summer, is the consensus No. 1 prospect in the 2025 recruiting cycle. Known for his scoring ability, athleticism, and high basketball IQ, the 6'9" small forward already has major NIL deals with Nike and Red Bull, and recently committed to play his college ball at BYU. The presumptive first

overall pick in the 2026 NBA Draft, Dybantsa's one-and-done path to the NBA is all but certain.

- **DARRYN PETERSON: SHARPSHOOTER FROM PROLIFIC PREP**

Regarded by most pundits as the country's No. 2-ranked senior, Peterson is a 6'6" shooting guard whose dynamic scoring ability and leadership has been crucial for Prolific Prep this season. He's committed to play for Bill Self and the Kansas Jayhawks and, like Dybantsa, is expected to be a lottery pick in the 2026 NBA draft. Peterson has NIL deals with Adidas and Fanatics. He was the first high school athlete to sign an NIL deal with Adidas.

- **MIKEL BROWN, JR: THE FLORIDA FLOOR GENERAL**

Rounding out the Grind Session players tabbed as Naismith High School Player of the Year semifinalists is Mikel Brown Jr., a 6'3" point guard who plays for DME Academy in Daytona Beach, Florida. He's a consensus Top 10 recruit in the 2025 cycle. Known for his court vision and scoring ability, Brown announced his commitment to Louisville on New Year's Day. Like Peterson, Brown has an NIL deal with Adidas, which sponsors Louisville.

Here's the full list of semifinalists for this year's Naismith High School Player of the Year award:

- AJ Dybantsa – ESPN No. 1 prospect – Signed with BYU Cougars
- Darryn Peterson – ESPN No. 2 prospect – Signed with Kansas Jayhawks
- Cameron Boozer – ESPN No. 3 prospect – Signed with Duke Blue Devils
- Nate Ament – ESPN No. 4 prospect – Undecided
- Darius Acuff Jr. – ESPN No. 5 prospect – Signed with Arkansas Razorbacks
- Caleb Wilson – ESPN No. 7 prospect – Committed to North Carolina Tar Heels
- Mikel brown, Jr. – ESPN No. 8 prospect – Signed with Louisville Cardinals
- Koa Peat – ESPN No. 9 prospect – Undecided
- Brayden Burries – ESPN No. 11 prospect – Undecided
- Braylon Mullins – ESPN No. 14 prospect – Signed with UConn Huskies

The semifinalists still have a month to make their respective cases for the prestigious award, which will be presented to one winner on March 7.

First presented in 1987, the award is named after James Naismith, a Canadian-American physical education instructor best known for inventing the game of basketball. It's given annually by the Atlanta Tipoff Club to high school basketball's top male and female player. Previous winners include Kobe Bryant (1996), LeBron James (2003), Chris Webber (1991), Jason Kidd (1992), and Alonzo Mourning (1998), among other NBA superstars.

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