

**ORONO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MAINE BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (March 21, 2024) — In its 39<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Pierce Walston** of **Orono High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Maine Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Walston is the first Gatorade Maine Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Orono High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation’s top high school athletes for excellence on the court, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Walston as Maine’s best high school boys basketball player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes LeBron James (2002-03 & 2001-02, St. Vincent – St. Mary High School, Ohio), Karl-Anthony Towns (2013-14 & 2012-13, St. Joseph High School, N.J.) and Jayson Tatum (2015-16, 2014-15 & 2013-14, Chaminade College Preparatory School, Mo.).

The 6-foot, 165-pound senior guard averaged 17.8 points and 6.8 assists this past season, leading the Red Riots (19-3) to the Class B state championship. Ranked as the Class of 2024’s No. 15 recruit in Maine by the New England Recruiting Report, Walston also averaged 6.3 rebounds and 3.4 steals per game. A two-time state champion, he was named the Class B state tournament MVP and was a semifinalist for Maine’s Mr. Basketball award.

Walston has volunteered locally with the Riot Buddies, a school program for high school upperclassmen to mentor middle schoolers, and has donated his time as a youth basketball coach. “In my nearly 40 years of coaching both high school and collegiately, I have not seen another young person exhibit more growth as a person and player,” said Ed Kohtala, head coach of Orono High School. “He has become an expert at dissecting opposing defenses. Though he is our primary ball-handler and the director of our offense, he normally draws a tough defensive assignment against one of our opponent’s top scorers. There is no one on our team whose role is more extensive or demanding.”

Walston has maintained an A average in the classroom. Having already committed to joining the Air National Guard, he remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Walston joins recent Gatorade Maine Boys Basketball Players of the Year William Davies (2022-23, Thornton Academy), Cooper Flagg (2021-22, Nokomis Regional High School), Cash McClure (2020-21, Maranacook Community High School) and Bryce Lausier (2019-20, Hampden Academy), among the state’s list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade’s commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners’ grants have totaled more than \$4.9 million across more than 1,600 organizations.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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