

SPAIN PARK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (March 6, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Sarah Ashlee Barker of Spain Park High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Barker is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Spain Park High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Barker as Alabama’s best high school girls basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced in March, Barker joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Maya Moore (2005-06 Collins Hill High School, Ga.), Rashanda McCants (2004-05, Asheville High School, N.C.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central High School, Ill.), Diana Taurasi (1998-99 & 1999-00, Don Antonio Lugo High School, Calif.), Shyra Ely (1999-00, Ben Davis High School, Ind.), Katie Smith (1991-92, Logan High School, Ohio) and Lisa Leslie (1988-89, Morningside High School, Calif.).

The 6-foot senior guard led the Jaguars to a 32-4 record and the Class 7A state championship this past season. Barker averaged 23.2 points, 9.9 rebounds, 2.7 assists and 1.9 steals per game, contributing a double-double with 11 points and 15 rebounds in Spain Park’s 47-44 win over Hoover High in the state final. The 2018-19 Class 7A Player of the Year, Barker is a two-time First Team All-State selection. She concluded her prep basketball career with 2,222 points and 1,107 rebounds.

Barker has volunteered locally on a school leadership panel aimed at preventing bullying and discrimination. “Sarah Ashlee is the best girls basketball player I have ever seen in high school and certainly the best player I have ever coached against,” said John Smelser, head coach of Vestavia Hills High. “She has all the tools to be a great player, but what makes her so good is her mentality. She refuses to lose.”

Barker has maintained a 3.31 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Georgia this fall.

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 and field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

[EDITING NOTE: MAY NEED TO ADD “TWO-TIME WINNER” HERE IS THE PLAYER HAS WON BEFORE Barker joins Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball Players of the Year Annie Hughes (2018-19, Pisgah High School), Zipporah Broughton (2017-18, Lee High School), Bianca Jackson (2016-17, Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School), Jasmine Walker (2015-16, Jeff Davis High School), Shaquera Wade (2014-15, Huntsville High School), and Alexis Jennings (2013-14, Sparkman High School) as athletes who have won the basketball award since its inception in 2007.

As a part of Gatorade’s cause marketing platform “Play it Forward,” Barker also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of her choosing. She is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program’s inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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