

## **EAST HAVEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE CONNECTICUT GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (March 8, 2019) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Makenzie Helms of East Haven High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Connecticut Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Helms is the first Gatorade Connecticut Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from East Haven 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 Helms as Connecticut'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, Helms 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, 2002-03 & 2003-04, 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 5-foot-8 senior guard led the Yellowjackets to a 20-5 record and the Class L quarterfinals at the time of her selection. Helms averaged 26.5 points, 7.4 rebounds, 6.6 assists and 4.3 steals through 25 games. The Southern Connecticut Conference Player of the Year, she is a New Haven Register First Team All-State honoree, and was selected to the 2018 USA TODAY ALL-USA Connecticut First Team.

Helms has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. "Helms can get baskets whenever she wants," said Tim Tredwell, head coach at Daniel Hand High. "She's very quick with a great first step and her jump shot is just picture perfect. She's very unselfish too."

Helms has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Nebraska 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 & 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.

Helms joins Gatorade Connecticut Girls Basketball Players of the Year Bella Santoro (2017-18, Mercy High School), McKenna Dale (2016-17, E.O. Smith High School), Shaquana Edwards (2015-16, Weaver High School), and Kiah Gillespie (2014-15 & 2013-14, Capital Prep) as athletes who have recently won the basketball award.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Helms 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

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