

HOPKINS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MINNESOTA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (March 8, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Paige Bueckers of Hopkins High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Bueckers is the first Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Hopkins 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 Bueckers as Minnesota'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, Bueckers 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 6-foot junior guard had led the Royals to a 28-0 record and the Class AAAA sectional final at the time of her selection. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Basketball Player of the Year, Bueckers averaged 24.4 points, 5.1 assists, 4.9 rebounds and 4.6 steals through 28 games. A starter for the gold-medal winning USA Basketball U17 Women's World Cup Team, she also won a gold medal for the U.S. at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games 3x3 competition. Bueckers was the Minneapolis Star Tribune Metro Player of the Year as a sophomore and is a three-time All-State honoree.

Bueckers organized her own series of youth basketball clinics, "Buckets With Bueckers," which offered free admission to players in Minnesota and Montana, while raising funds for local charities via donations and corporate sponsorships. "If you went into a laboratory and made a basketball player, Paige Bueckers would be the result," said Matt Nilsen, head coach at Edina High School. "She went over 2,000 career points, but what separates her from most scorers is her court vision and her passing. Her decision-making ability is extraordinarily fast, unlike anything I've seen."

Bueckers has maintained a 3.78 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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.

Two-time winner Bueckers joins Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Players of the Year Gabi Haack (2016-17, Elk River High School), Taylor Koenen (2015-16, Shakopee High School), Madison Guebert (2014-15, Eastview High School), and Chase Coley (2013-14, Washburn High School) as athletes who have won the basketball award.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Bueckers 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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