

**HELENA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MONTANA 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 **Jamie Pickens of Helena High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Pickens is the second Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Helena 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 Pickens as Montana'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, Pickens 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-2 senior post had led the Bengals to a 19-2 record and a berth in the Class AA state tournament quarterfinals at the time of her selection. Pickens averaged 17.0 points, 12.2 rebounds, 3.7 steals, 2.4 blocks and 2.1 assists through 21 games. A two-time First Team All-State selection, she is the only four-star recruit in Montana and was nominated for the McDonald's All-American Game.

Also an All-State volleyball and softball player, Pickens has volunteered locally as part of fundraising campaigns to benefit both cancer and mental health research. She has also donated her time as an elementary school teacher's aide and as a youth sports coach. "Jamie truly is a player in a league of her own," said Erika Gustavsen, head coach of Bozeman High. "She is so dangerous because she is versatile on both ends of the court. She is a great teammate and makes everyone around her better."

Pickens has maintained a 3.77 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Montana beginning 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 Pickens joins Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Players of the Year Sophia Stiles (2016-17 & 2015-16, Malta High School), Taylor Goligoski (2014-15, Hamilton High School), and Jill Barta (2013-14, Fairfield High School) as athletes who have recently won the basketball award.

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