

**WYOMING EAST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 **Emily Saunders of Wyoming East High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade West Virginia Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Saunders is the first Gatorade West Virginia Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Wyoming East 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 Saunders as West Virginia'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, Saunders 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-4 senior center had led the Warriors to a 22-3 record and the Class AA state quarterfinals at the time of her selection. Saunders averaged 13.7 points, 6.8 rebounds and 4.2 blocks through 25 games, converting 57.8 percent of her field goal attempts. A three-time All-State honoree, she was selected to the USA TODAY's ALL-USA West Virginia First Team as a junior and is ranked as the nation's No. 88 recruit in the Class of 2019 by Prospects Nation.

A devoted member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and a talented singer, Saunders has volunteered locally on behalf of Students Against Destructive Decisions. "Saunders is a great shot-blocker," said Gehrig Justice, head coach at River View High School. "This year they moved her to the low post and she's become a more dominant offensive weapon too. She's very unselfish, but any time she wants to take over a game, she can."

Saunders has maintained a 3.52 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Tennessee 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.

Saunders joins Gatorade West Virginia Girls Basketball Players of the Year Hanna McClung (2017-18, Buckhannon-Upshur High School), Jordyn Dawson (2016-17 & 2015-16, Huntington High School), Shayna Gore (2014-15, Logan High School), and Mychal Johnson (2013-14, St. Joseph Central Catholic High School) as athletes who have recently won the basketball award.

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