

BISHOP MIEGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KANSAS 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 **Payton Verhulst of Bishop Miege High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Kansas Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Verhulst is the second Gatorade Kansas Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Bishop Miege 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 Verhulst as Kansas' 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, Verhulst 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 junior guard had led the Stags to an 18-2 record and the Class 4A state tournament at the time of her selection. Verhulst averaged 17.8 points, 7.0 rebounds, 3.7 assists and 2.5 blocks in the regular season. Captain of the USA Basketball U16 Women's National Team, she earned MVP honors at the FIBA Americas U16 Championship. Verhulst is a two-time First Team All-State honoree and is ranked as the nation's No. 8 recruit in the Class of 2021 by ESPN.

Also a volleyball standout, Verhulst has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army, a food bank and youth sports programs. "Payton Verhulst is the best basketball player I have ever coached against," said Drew Walters, head coach at Mill Valley High. "She is a great defender and offensively she can get to any spot on the floor. She's very willing to share the ball, but she knows when to take control of games."

Verhulst has maintained a 3.70 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 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.

Verhulst joins Gatorade Kansas Girls Basketball Players of the Year Kennedy Brown (2018-19, Derby High School), Emily Ryan (2017-18, Central Plains High School), Taylor Robertson (2016-17, McPherson High School), Kendrian Elliott (2015-16, Wichita South High School), Keiryn Swenson (2014-15, Maize High School), and Kaylee Page (2013-14, Wamego 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," Verhulst 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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