

HOPKINS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 **Paige Bueckers of Hopkins High School** as its **2019-20 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, 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 senior guard led the Royals to a 27-0 record and the Class AAAA sectional final at the time of her selection. The state's two-time returning Gatorade Girls Basketball Player of the Year, Bueckers averaged 21.4 points, 9.4 assists, 5.4 steals and 5.0 rebounds through 27 games. A starter for the gold medal-winning USA Basketball U19 Women's World Cup Team, she is a finalist for the Naismith High School Girls Player of the Year trophy. Also a two-time Minneapolis Star Tribune Metro Player of the Year, Bueckers has been chosen to play in both the McDonald's All-American Game and the Jordan Brand Classic, and is ranked as the nation's No. 1 recruit in the Class of 2020 by ESPN.

Bueckers organized her own series of youth basketball clinics, "Buckets With Bueckers," which offers free admission to players in Minnesota and Montana, while raising funds for local charities via donations and corporate sponsorships. An invited speaker and honorary guest at Lucy Laney grade school in North Minneapolis, she has also donated her time volunteering as a reader at the Hopkins Public Library. "Paige plays with natural instincts and an enthusiasm for the game that is becoming harder and harder to find at the elite level within our sport," said Chris Menning, vice president and national evaluator for Blue Star Basketball. "She's a skilled guard with length and carries the full complement of sharp and efficient tools onto the court. She also impacts the game in a broader fashion than most of her peers—Paige can be the go-to scorer when needed, but has the ability to create for others as well as impact the defensive end of the floor. She's a fierce competitor who's already enjoyed great success in international competition, and we'll be seeing her name throughout and beyond the college basketball scene in the years to come."

Bueckers has maintained a 3.80 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Connecticut 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.

Three-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 since its inception in 2007.

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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