

## EUGENE ASHLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

**CHICAGO** (March 6, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Saniya Rivers of Eugene Ashley High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Rivers is the first Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Eugene Ashley 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 Rivers as North Carolina’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, Rivers 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 led the Screaming Eagles to a 25-4 record and the quarterfinals of the Class 4A state tournament at the time of her selection. The state’s returning Gatorade Girls Basketball Player of the Year, Rivers averaged 25.0 points, 11.8 rebounds, 6.4 steals and 4.3 assists through 29 games. The Mideastern Conference Player of the Year, Rivers is a two-time All-State selection and is ranked as the nation’s No. 3 recruit in the Class of 2021 by ESPN.

A member of her school’s leadership academy, Rivers has volunteered locally on behalf of an aquarium. “Saniya Rivers is a special, special player,” said Ray Nobles, head coach at South Brunswick High. “She recognizes whatever her team needs and she provides it. If they need her to score or need her to distribute or need her to play defense—she just makes everybody better.”

Rivers has maintained a 3.25 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.

Two-time winner Rivers joins Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Players of the Year Izabela Nicoletti (2017-18, Neuse Christian Academy), Mikayla Boykin (2016-17, Clinton High School), Erin Whalen (2015-16, Providence Day School), Stephanie Watts (2014-15, Weddington High School), and Jatarie White (2013-14, Providence Day 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,” Rivers 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](https://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

###