

## O'DEA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE® WASHINGTON BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

**CHICAGO** (March 26, 2020) — In its 35<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Paolo Banchemo of O'Dea High School** as its **2019-20 Gatorade Washington Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Banchemo is the second Gatorade Washington Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from O'Dea 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 Banchemo as Washington's best high school boys basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year award, Banchemo joins an elite alumni association of past state boys basketball award winners, including Karl-Anthony Towns (2012-13 & 2013-14, St. Joseph High School, N.J.), Dwight Howard (2003-04, Southwest Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.), Chris Bosh (2001-02, Lincoln High School, Texas), Paul Pierce (1994-95, Inglewood High School, Calif.), Chauncey Billups (1993-94 & 1994-95, George Washington High School, Colo.) and Jason Kidd (1991-92, St. Joseph Notre Dame High School, Calif.).

The 6-foot-9, 230-pound junior forward led the Fighting Irish to a 23-6 record and the Class 3A state championship game this past season. Banchemo averaged 22.6 points, 11.0 rebounds, 3.7 assists and 1.6 blocks per game. A First Team All-State selection, he is also the Seattle Times Player of the Year and the Metro League MVP. Banchemo is ranked as the nation's No. 2 recruit in the Class of 2021 by Rivals.com.

Banchemo has raised funds to benefit breast cancer research and has volunteered locally on behalf of an elementary school reading initiative as well as with youth basketball programs. "Banchemo isn't showy, he just takes care of business," said Steve Haizlip, head coach at Bainbridge High. "It's crazy to see his skillset at that size. He handles the ball like a point guard, he can really shoot, and the way he moves is incredible. He's an amazing talent."

Banchemo has maintained a B average in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school this fall.

Banchemo joins Gatorade Washington Boys Basketball Players of the Year Jaden McDaniels (2018-19, Federal Way High School), Brock Ravet (2017-18, Kittitas Secondary School), Michael Porter Jr. (2016-17, Nathan Hale High School), Isiah Brown (2015-16, Lakeside School), and Dejounte Murray (2014-15, Rainier Beach High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

The 2019-2020 Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year announcement has been temporarily postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. To ensure the safety of everyone involved, The Gatorade Company will follow the guidance of experts and health officials as it determines the appropriate time to announce this year's winner.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Banchemo also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He 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](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

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