

**EAST HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 27, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Shailyn Pinkney of East Hartford High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Connecticut Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Pinkney is the first Gatorade Connecticut Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from East Hartford 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 Pinkney as Connecticut'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 June, Pinkney joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Skylar Diggins-Smith (2008-09, Washington High School, Ind.), Nneka Ogwumike (2007-08, Cy-Fair High School, Texas), Maya Moore (2006-07, Collins Hill High School, Ga.), Candace Parker (2002-03 & 2003-04, Naperville Central High School, Ill.), and Lisa Leslie (1989-90, Morningside High School, Calif.).

The 5-foot-10 junior guard led the Hornets to a 10-3 record this past season, averaging 18 points, 10 rebounds, four assists and two steals per game. The Hearst Connecticut Media Group's GameTimeCT Girls Basketball MVP, Pinkney scored her 1,000th career point in the first game of her junior campaign. A starter since her freshman year, Pinkney is also a three-time Class LL First Team All-State selection.

Pinkney has volunteered locally as part of her school's student-athlete leadership council in addition to working at youth basketball clinics and on behalf of community cleanup with East Hartford Public Works. She has also volunteered writing pen-pal letters with elderly community members and has been a mentor in the school's Unified sports program for physically and intellectually challenged youth. "Shailyn is a skilled player who creates problems for us defensively, but I think being Gatorade Player of the Year is more than just having talent," said Amy Bellone, head coach at Tolland High School. "I think she's the emotional center of her team, and helps keep everyone's heads in the game and fires up those around her."

Pinkney has maintained a weighted 3.51 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 & 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 works with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Pinkney joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Girls Basketball Players of the Year Allie Palmieri (2019-20, Greens Farms Academy), Makenzie Helms (2018-19, East Haven High School), Bella Santoro (2017-18, Mercy High School), and McKenna Dale (2016-17, Edwin O. Smith High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Pinkney has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Pinkney is also eligible to submit a 30-second video explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants, which will be announced throughout the year. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$2.7 million across 1,117 organizations.

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 playeroftheyear.gatorade.com, on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.

###