

**H.B. PLANT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA 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 Kendal Cheesman of H.B. Plant High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Florida Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Cheesman is the first Gatorade Florida Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from H.B. Plant 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 Cheesman as Florida'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, Cheesman 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 6-foot-2 senior guard and forward led the Panthers to a 26-3 record and the Class 7A state championship this past season. Cheesman averaged 17.8 points, 9.7 rebounds, 2.7 assists, 2.7 steals and 1.8 blocks per game, and she netted 24 points to go with 18 rebounds in Plant's 52-40 win over Miami High in the state final. Ranked as the nation's No. 78 recruit in the Class of 2021 by Prospects Nation, Cheesman is the 2021 Florida Dairy Farmers Class 7A Player of the Year. She concluded her prep basketball career with 1,704 points and 1,177 rebounds.

President of the Plant High student government, Cheesman has volunteered locally as part of multiple community service initiatives in association with her school's National Honor Society. She has also donated her time to Best Buddies and as a youth basketball coach. "Kendal is an exceptional talent," said Josh Goldstein, head coach of Steinbrenner High. "She can do everything her team has ever asked of her—handle the ball, shoot, pass and rebound. She stretches the defense and will make you pay for not stepping out to guard her, but if you do, she can put it on the floor and attack the basket."

Cheesman has maintained a 3.98 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at Vanderbilt University 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.

Cheesman joins recent Gatorade Florida Girls Basketball Players of the Year O'Mariah Gordon (2019-20 & 2018-19, Braden River High School), Destanni Henderson (2017-18, Lakewood High School), and Rennia Davis (2016-17, Jean Ribault High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Cheesman has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Cheesman 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.