

**MARSHALL SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE MINNESOTA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 27, 2021) — In its 36<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Gianna Kneepkens of Marshall School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Kneepkens is the first Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Marshall 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 Kneepkens 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 June, Kneepkens 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-11 senior guard led the Hilltoppers to an 18-3 record and the Class AA state quarterfinals this past season. Kneepkens scored a state-record 43.1 points per game, while also averaging 13.4 rebounds, 5.9 assists and 5.7 steals. A First Team All-State honoree, she was a finalist for Minnesota Ms. Basketball and finished her career with 3,702 points, fifth on the state's all-time scoring list. Kneepkens also broke the state record for points in a game with a 67-point outburst in the Class AA playoffs against Providence Academy. She is ranked as the nation's No. 73 recruit in the Class of 2021 by Prospects Nation.

The president of her class, Kneepkens has served as a tutor for younger students, has raised funds to support liver disease research and has volunteered locally on behalf of clothing-donation drives and youth basketball programs. "Gianna Kneepkens is the best pure scorer I've ever seen," said Scott Antonutti, head coach at Esko High. "Long range, transition, mid range—she can score from anywhere. She also rebounds well, she's a deceptively good defender and she really sees the court."

Kneepkens has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Utah 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.

Kneepkens joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Players of the Year Paige Bueckers (2019-20, 2018-19 & 2017-18, Hopkins High School), and Gabi Haack (2016-17, Elk River High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Kneepkens has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. Kneepkens 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com), on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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