

**EUGENE ASHLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 Saniya Rivers of Eugene Ashley High School as its 2020-21 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 June, Rivers joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Skylar Diggins-Smith (2008-09, Washington High School, Ind.), Nneka Ogumike (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-1 senior guard led the Screaming Eagles to a 15-2 record and the Class 4A semifinals this past season. The state's two-time returning Gatorade Girls Basketball Player of the Year, Rivers averaged 36.8 points, 11.5 rebounds, 5.3 steals and 5.1 assists per game. The North Carolina Basketball Coaches Association Player of the year, she is a three-time All-State honoree and a McDonald's All-American. Rivers was also selected to the WBCA High School Coaches' All-America team and is ranked as the nation's No. 2 prospect in the Class of 2021 by Prospects Nation.

Also a high-jumper for the track team, Rivers is a member of the Ashley Leadership Council and a bible study group. She has volunteered locally as an instructor and mentor for young players at the MLK Center and the Brigade Boys and Girls Club. During the pandemic, she regularly performed shopping duties for an elderly, immunocompromised neighbor. "Saniya Rivers is the best basketball player I have ever coached against," said Martin Faison, head coach at Knightdale High. "Her stats are outrageous, but it's even more spectacular to see it on the court."

Rivers has maintained a 3.38 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of South Carolina 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.

Three-time winner Rivers joins Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Players of the Year Izabela Nicoletti (2017-18, Neuse Christian Academy), and Mikayla Boykin (2016-17, Clinton High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

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