

**EAST CLARENDON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH 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 Talaysia Cooper of East Clarendon High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade South Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Cooper is the first Gatorade South Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from East Clarendon 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 Cooper as South 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, Cooper 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 junior swing player averaged 23.7 points, 12.8 rebounds, 8.0 assists, 4.6 blocks and 2.2 steals this past season in leading the Wolverines to a 10-1 record and the Class 1A state tournament. The South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association's Class 1A Player of the Year, Cooper has already scored 2,446 points in her high school career. She is the nation's No. 8 prospect in the Class of 2022 as rated by espnW.

A member of the Young People's Association at her church, Cooper has volunteered locally as a youth basketball coach. "Talaysia has all the components of an all-around player," said Chakaris Thomas, head coach at Hemingway High. "She scores, assists, rebounds, blocks shots and makes steals. She has worked hard on being that teammate who controls the floor with her ball-handling and decision-making."

Cooper has maintained a B average 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.

Cooper joins recent Gatorade South Carolina Girls Basketball Players of the Year Loyal McQueen (2019-20, Wilson High School), Danae McNeal (2018-19, Swansea High School), Amari Young (2017-18, North Augusta High School), and Jaelynn Murray (2016-17, Dreher High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

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