

**FAIRMONT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Marley Washenitz of Fairmont Senior High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade West Virginia Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Washenitz is the first Gatorade West Virginia Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Fairmont Senior 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 Washenitz as West Virginia'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, Washenitz 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 Polar Bears to an 18-1 record and the Class AAA state title game this past season, averaging 20.1 points, 10 assists, nine rebounds, seven steals and 1.3 blocks per game. The No. 1 prospect in West Virginia for the Class of 2022 as rated by Prep Girls Hoops, Washenitz is a two-time All-State selection by the West Virginia Sportswriters Association. She has scored 1,346 points in her high school career.

A lifelong member of the LIFE United Methodist Church, Washenitz has also donated her time to creating live virtual basketball training sessions for youth players called "Locked in with Marley." Also a talented gymnast, who is the second cousin of 1984 Olympic gold medalist Mary Lou Retton, Washenitz volunteers locally with the Special Olympics and as a youth basketball coach. "Marley is an excellent guard," said Herman Pierson, head coach at Bridgeport High. "She's gritty, she plays hard, drives well, shoots well. She's as good as anybody in the state.

Washenitz has maintained a 3.91 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.

Washenitz joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Girls Basketball Players of the Year Grace Hutson (2019-20, St. Joseph Central Catholic High School), Emily Saunders (2018-19, Wyoming East High School), Hanna McClung (2017-18, Buckhannon-Upshur High School), and Jordyn Dawson (2016-17, Huntington High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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