

**SANDY CREEK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE GEORGIA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 4, 2021) — In its 36th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced Jabari Smith of Sandy Creek High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Georgia Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Smith is the first Gatorade Georgia Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Sandy Creek 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 Smith as Georgia's best high school boys basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced in June, Smith joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Jayson Tatum (2015-16, Chaminade College Preparatory School, Mo.), Karl-Anthony Towns (2012-13 & 2013-14, St. Joseph High School, N.J.), Jabari Parker (2011-12, Simeon Career Academy, Ill.) and Dwight Howard (2003-04, Southwest Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.).

The 6-foot-10, 210-pound senior forward averaged 24 points, 10 rebounds, 3 assists and 3 blocks per game this past season, leading the Patriots (28-5) to the Class AAA state championship game. A McDonald's All-American Game selection, Smith was one of 10 semifinalists for the Naismith High School Trophy. Smith won a gold medal at the 2019 FIBA U16 Americas Championship as a member of Team USA and is ranked as the nation's No. 5 recruit in the Class of 2021 by ESPN.com. He concluded his prep basketball career with 1,952 points.

Smith has volunteered locally with Unity in the Community, a non-profit that benefits a homeless shelter for women and children. "Jabari is one of the most talented, versatile and high-character prospects in the high school game," said Paul Biancardi, ESPN National Recruiting Director. "He is a prototypical version of today's power forward. He rebounds and changes shots with his wingspan."

Smith has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at Auburn 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.

Smith joins recent Gatorade Georgia Boys Basketball Players of the Year Walker Kessler (2019-20, Woodward Academy), Sharife Cooper (2018-19, McEachern High School), Ashton Hagans (2017-18, Newton High School), and Wendell Carter (2016-17, Pace Academy), among the state's list of former award winners.

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