

**HIGHLANDS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 Sam Vinson of Highlands High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Kentucky Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Vinson is the second Gatorade Kentucky Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Highlands 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 Vinson as Kentucky'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, Vinson 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-4, 175-pound senior guard led the Bluebirds to a 30-4 record and the state championship this past season. Vinson averaged 22.3 points, 8.9 rebounds, 6.0 assists, 2.6 steals and 1.9 blocks per game while connecting on 56.7 percent of his field-goal attempts. Vinson tallied 20 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists in Highlands' 79-60 win over Elizabethtown High in the state final to earn State Tournament MVP honors. The 9th Region Player of the Year, he concluded his prep basketball career with 1,791 points.

Vinson has volunteered locally at a soup kitchen, and he has donated his time on behalf of community beautification projects and as a youth basketball coach. "The best compliment I can give Sam is he is unselfish," said Dave Faust, head coach of St. Henry High. "He can score inside or step out to shoot a 3. He can take it off the bounce and when defenses collapse on him, he finds the open man."

Vinson has maintained a weighted 4.04 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at Northern Kentucky 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.

Vinson joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Boys Basketball Players of the Year Alex Matthews (2019-20, John Hardin High School), Isaiah Cozart (2018-19, Madison Central High School), CJ Fredrick (2017-18, Covington Catholic High School), and Taveion Hollingsworth (2016-17, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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

###