

**CALLAWAY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 Daeshun Ruffin of Callaway High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Ruffin is the second Gatorade Mississippi Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Callaway 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 Ruffin as Mississippi'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, Ruffin 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 5-foot-10, 185-pound senior guard led the Chargers to a 10-1 record and the Class 5A quarterfinals this past season. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Ruffin averaged 33.1 points, 3.3 rebounds and 2.8 assists per game. Also a McDonald's All-American, he is a First Team All-State selection and played in the Allen Iverson Roundball Classic. He is ranked as the nation's No. 40 prospect in the Class of 2021 by ESPN.

Ruffin has served as an elementary school mentor and has volunteered locally on behalf of a youth summer camp. "Daeshun Ruffin is an exciting player and high-energy point guard whose specialty is scoring and shooting," said Paul Biancardi, ESPN National Recruiting Director. "He thrives in the open floor for easy baskets. He can be a big disruptor on the defensive end when he picks up a ball-handler in the backcourt. An ESPN 100 prospect, he's a dynamic player and will be a crowd favorite at Ole Miss."

Ruffin has maintained a 3.11 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Mississippi 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.

Two-time winner Ruffin joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Boys Basketball Players of the Year D.J. Jeffries (2018-19, Olive Branch High School), and Robert Woodard (2017-18 & 2016-17, Columbus High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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