

**POCA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Isaac McKneely of Poca High School as its 2020-21 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Basketball Player of the Year. McKneely is the second Gatorade West Virginia Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Poca 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 McKneely as West Virginia'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, McKneely 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 junior guard averaged 23 points, 4.3 rebounds and 3.9 assists per game in leading the Dots to a 13-5 finish that included a trip to the Class AA state final. Also the 2020-21 MaxPreps West Virginia High School Boys Basketball Player of the Year and the West Virginia Sports Writers Association Player of the Year, McKneely is a three-time Cardinal Conference First-Team selection and two-time First-Team All-State honoree. He is ranked as the nation's No. 58 prospect in the Class of 2022 by 247 Sports.

McKneely has volunteered on behalf of his Poca United Methodist Church congregation in numerous capacities, including as a server at the annual senior citizen dinner. He has also volunteered locally with the Five Loaves and Two Fishes Food Bank in addition to donating his time at the Winning Edge Camp to help raise money for the Poca High basketball program. "Isaac is the most special player in the state by far, in my opinion," said Austin Lowe, head coach at Nitro High. "He's worked hard for what he's gotten and doesn't act like a star, but he is."

McKneely has maintained a 4.1 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his 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.

McKneely joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Boys Basketball Players of the Year Jaemyn Brakefield (2019-20, 2018-19, & 2017-18 Huntington-St. Joseph Prep), and Luke Frampton (2016-17, Poca High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Through Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," McKneely has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of their choosing. McKneely 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 www.playeroftheyear.gatorade.com, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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