

**HAZEL GREEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 9, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Samiya Steele** of **Hazel Green High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Steele is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Hazel Green 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 court, distinguishes Steele as Alabama'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 March, Steele 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, CyFair 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-8 senior guard had led the Trojans to a 34-0 record and a berth in the Class 6A state championship game at the time of her selection. Steele averaged 16.8 points, 5.3 assists, 4.6 rebounds and 2.1 steals per game through 34 games as Hazel Green sought its fifth straight state title. She is a two-time First Team All-State selection and was the MVP of the 2021 state championship game.

Steele has volunteered locally with ProjectXYZ, a technical solutions company in Huntsville. She has also donated her time with the Future Career & Community Leaders of America. "Sam can shoot it from deep and is a freight train going to the basket," said Mike Chase, head coach of Spain Park High School. "She will stand in and take a charge and she guards the opposing team's best player regardless of position."

Steele has maintained a 3.79 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at Alabama State 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Steele joins recent Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball Players of the Year Sara Puckett (2020-21, Muscle Shoals High School), Sarah Ashlee Barker (2019-20, Spain Park High School), Annie Hughes (2018-19, Pisgah High School), and Zipporah Broughton (2017-18, Lee High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Gatorade has a long-standing history of serving athlete communities and understands how sports instill valuable lifelong skills on and off the court. Through Gatorade's "Play it Forward" platform, Steele has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national organization of their choosing that helps young athletes realize the benefits of playing sports. Steele is also eligible to submit a short 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 \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 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 or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.