

**SIERRA CANYON SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE CALIFORNIA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (March 9, 2022) — In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Juju Watkins** of **Sierra Canyon School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade California Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Watkins is the first Gatorade California Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Sierra Canyon 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 Watkins as California'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, Watkins joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Skylar Diggins-Smith (2008-09, Washington High School, Ind.), Nneka Ogumike (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 6-foot-2 junior guard had led the Trailblazers to a 27-2 record and the quarterfinals of the state Open Division tournament at the time of her selection. Watkins averaged 24.5 points, 10.3 rebounds, 3.2 assists, 2.8 steals and 2.0 blocks through 29 games. The Los Angeles Times Player of the Year as a freshman, she led the USA Basketball Women's U16 National Team to the FIBA Americas championship this past summer, earning tournament MVP honors. She's ranked as the nation's No. 2 prospect in the Class of 2023 by ESPN.

Watkins has volunteered locally on behalf of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee as well as a food bank, toy-donation drives and youth basketball camps. "Juju Watkins is the best player that I've seen this year, by far," said Ryan Wilde, head coach at Crossroads School. "She has tremendous skill and she's very competitive and driven."

Watkins has maintained a 3.67 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her 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 leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Watkins joins recent Gatorade California Girls Basketball Players of the Year Brooke Demetre (2020-21, Mater Dei High School), Te-Hina Paopao (2019-20, La Jolla Country Day School), and Haley Jones (2018-19 & 2017-18, Archbishop Mitty 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, Watkins 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. Watkins 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).