

**WICHITA HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KANSAS 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 **Zyanna Walker** of **Wichita Heights High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Kansas Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Walker is the first Gatorade Kansas Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Wichita Heights 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 Walker as Kansas' 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, Walker 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 5-foot-11 senior guard had led the Falcons to an 18-3 record and the Class 6A Sub-State finals at the time of her selection. Walker averaged 25.7 points, 8.4 rebounds, 5.8 assists and 5.1 steals through 21 games. An All-State and All-Metro selection as a sophomore, she is ranked as the nation's No. 38 prospect in the Class of 2022 by ESPN.

A peer leader in her school, Walker has volunteered locally on behalf of Thanksgiving food-donation drives and youth basketball programs. "Zyanna Walker is one of the most dynamic players I've seen in a long time," said Thsombe Phillips, head coach at Wichita South High School. "She's got the complete package and her basketball IQ is off the charts. She gets it done on both the offensive end and the defensive end."

Walker has maintained a 3.91 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Louisville 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.

Walker joins recent Gatorade Kansas Girls Basketball Players of the Year Payton Verhulst (2020-21 & 2019-20, Bishop Miege High School), Kennedy Brown (2018-19, Derby High School), and Emily Ryan (2017-18, Central Plains 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, Walker 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. Walker 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.