

**SACRED HEART ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 **ZaKiyah Johnson** of **Sacred Heart Academy** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Kentucky Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Johnson is the second Gatorade Kentucky Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Sacred Heart Academy.

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 Johnson as Kentucky'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, Johnson 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 freshman guard and forward had led the Valkyries to a 31-3 record and a berth in the 7th Region Tournament championship game at the time of her selection. Johnson averaged 17.4 points, 7.8 rebounds, 3.2 assists, 1.9 steals and 1.0 blocks per game through 34 games. A member of the HoopGurlz Class of 2025 Watch List, she transferred to Sacred Heart this year from Shelby County High School, where she led the Rockets in points, rebounds, assists and blocks during the 2020-21 season as an eighth-grader.

Johnson has volunteered locally with the Kiwanis Club and the Salvation Army. She has also donated her time as a youth basketball coach and referee. "ZaKiyah is one of the hardest-working players I have ever coached," said Donna Moir, head coach of Sacred Heart Academy. "She's an elite talent, but still practices every day with the intent of getting better. Her knowledge of the game far exceeds players of the same age. On the court, there is nothing she can't do."

Johnson has maintained a 3.29 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her sophomore 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.

Johnson joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Girls Basketball Players of the Year Brooklynn Miles (2020-21, Franklin County High School), Maddie Scherr (2019-20 & 2018-19, Larry A. Ryle High School), and Seygan Robins (2017-18, Mercer County Senior 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, Johnson 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. Johnson 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.

###