

**CLARKSBURG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MARYLAND 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 **Riley Nelson** of **Clarksburg High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Maryland Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Nelson is the first Gatorade Maryland Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Clarksburg 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 Nelson as Maryland'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, Nelson 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-1 junior guard and forward had led the Coyotes to a 22-0 record and a berth in the Class 4A state quarterfinals at the time of her selection. Nelson averaged 17.1 points, 9.2 rebounds, 4.6 assists, 2.7 steals and 1.6 blocks per game through 22 games. Ranked as the nation's No. 36 recruit in the Class of 2023 by HoopGurlz, she played just one game as a freshman before breaking her wrist and then missed her entire sophomore year because of the pandemic.

An American Legion Community Service award winner, Nelson runs her own help-the-homeless foundation, which raises money and organizes clothing and food drives for local shelters. She has also volunteered locally preparing Thanksgiving meals for the needy and as a youth basketball coach. "Riley has great size and length which allows her to see the floor a step ahead of most competitors," said Ali Hashemzadeh, head coach of Seneca Valley High School. "She has a high basketball IQ and understands the smaller details of the game."

Nelson has maintained a weighted 4.24 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Maryland beginning in the fall of 2023.

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.

Nelson joins recent Gatorade Maryland Girls Basketball Players of the Year Regina Walton (2020-21, Elizabeth Seton High School), Mir McLean (2019-20, Roland Park Country School), Jakia Brown-Turner (2018-19, Bishop McNamara High School), and Nia Clouden (2017-18, St. Frances Academy), 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, Nelson 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. Nelson 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.

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