

**LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEVADA 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 **Ali'a Matavao** of **Liberty High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Nevada Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Matavao is the second Gatorade Nevada Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Liberty 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 Matavao as Nevada'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, Matavao 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 6-foot junior forward averaged 13.2 points, 9.8 rebounds and 3.1 steals per game this past season, leading the Patriots (18-2) to the Class 5A Southern League Tournament semifinals. The Class 5A Player of the Year, Matavao was named the MVP of the 2021 Page Arizona Holiday Championships and the Page Holiday Classic. She was an All-Southeast League Honorable Mention selection as a freshman despite playing in just nine games because of a knee injury.

A member of her church choir, Matavao has volunteered locally as an ambassador for the Victory Club, a drug-free advocacy program, and she has donated her time as both a peer mentor and as a photographer for the Liberty High football team. "Ali'a was amazing this year," said Vyron Wallace, head coach of Foothill High School. "Her all-around game is unmatched especially with her size and quickness."

Matavao has maintained a weighted 3.92 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.

Matavao joins recent Gatorade Nevada Girls Basketball Players of the Year Taylor Bigby (2020-21 & 2019-20, Centennial High School), Eboni Walker (2018-19, Centennial High School), and Justice Ethridge (2017-18, Centennial 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, Matavao 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. Matavao 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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