

**BERNALILLO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 **Juliana Aragon** of **Bernalillo High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Aragon is the first Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Bernalillo 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 Aragon as New Mexico'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, Aragon 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-5 senior point guard had led the Spartans to a 24-1 record and the No. 3 seed in the Class 4A state tournament at the time of her selection. Aragon averaged a state-best 30.3 points and 8.2 assists per game through 25 games this season, shooting 63 percent from the field, 52 percent from beyond the 3-point line and 87 percent from the free throw line. She entered the state tournament with 2,338 points scored in her prep basketball career.

Aragon has volunteered locally at RoadRunner Food Bank and she has distributed food to underserved families at Bernalillo Middle School. She has also donated her time as a youth basketball coach. "Juliana is a heady point guard and a prolific scorer—she's also an incredible passer," said Lori Stephenson, head coach of Cibola High School. "Juliana has scored ridiculous amounts of points even with two shortened seasons due to the pandemic. That girl can play."

Aragon has maintained a 4.4 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Aragon joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Players of the Year Viane Cumber (2020-21 & 2019-20, Sandia High School), Carsyn Boswell (2018-19, Carlsbad High School), and Amaya Brown (2017-18, Cibola 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, Aragon 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. Aragon 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.