

**CARDINAL NEWMAN SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA 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 **Ashlyn Watkins** of **Cardinal Newman School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade South Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Watkins is the first Gatorade South Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Cardinal Newman 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 Watkins as South Carolina'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, Watkins 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-3 senior forward led the Cardinals to a 15-5 record and a fourth-straight South Carolina Independent School Association Class 3A state championship this past season. Watkins averaged 20.5 points, 15.5 rebounds, 3.5 steals and 2.9 blocks per game. A 2022 McDonald's All-American, she will compete in the dunk contest during the McDonald's festivities and is ranked as the nation's No. 12 recruit in the Class of 2022 by HoopGurlz.

Watkins has volunteered locally as a peer tutor at Cardinal Newman and as a student ambassador for school events. She has also donated her time as a summer camp counselor. "In the post, Ashlyn reminds me of Shaquille O'Neal, when he would get beat up and not get the calls—Ashlyn just keeps playing," said Cornelius Snead, head coach of Trinity Collegiate School. "She is very gifted athletically and she single-handedly changes the game."

Watkins has maintained a 4.06 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of South Carolina 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.

Watkins joins recent Gatorade South Carolina Girls Basketball Players of the Year Talaysia Cooper (2020-21, East Clarendon High School), Loyal McQueen (2019-20, Wilson High School), Danae McNeal (2018-19, Swansea High School), and Amari Young (2017-18, North Augusta 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, Watkins 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. Watkins 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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