

**MAGNOLIA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (March 16, 2022) — In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Derrian Ford** of **Magnolia High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Ford is the first Gatorade Arkansas Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Magnolia 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 Ford as Arkansas' best high school boys basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced in March, Ford joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Jayson Tatum (2015-16, Chaminade College Preparatory School, Mo.), Karl-Anthony Towns (2012-13 & 2013-14, St. Joseph High School, N.J.), Jabari Parker (2011-12, Simeon Career Academy, Ill.) and Dwight Howard (2003-04, Southwest Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.).

The 6-foot-4, 203-pound senior guard had led the Panthers to a 28-0 record and the Class 4A state championship game at the time of his selection. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Ford averaged 23.1 points, 6.3 rebounds, 3.0 assists and 1.7 steals through 28 games. A four-time All-State honoree, three-time Conference Player of the Year, and two-time state tournament MVP, he was also a First Team All-Arkansas Preps selection as a junior.

A devoted member of his church community, Ford has served as an elementary school mentor and has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and the Make-a-Wish Foundation. "Very few players are as chiseled and powerful as Derrian Ford," Paul Biancardi of ESPN Basketball. "He's a hard dunker and driver who rebounds on both ends. With his aggressive style he generates trips to the free throw line and he's a capable outside shooter, too."

Ford has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Arkansas 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.

Two-time winner Ford joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Basketball Players of the Year Jaylin Williams (2019-20, Northside High School), Issac McBride (2018-19, The Baptist Preparatory School), and Isaiah Joe (2017-18, Northside 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, Ford 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. Ford 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com) or follow us on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://facebook.com/GatoradePOY), Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://instagram.com/Gatorade) and Twitter at [twitter.com/Gatorade](https://twitter.com/Gatorade).

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