

**MONTVERDE ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE FLORIDA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 16, 2022) — In its 37th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Dariq Whitehead** of **Montverde Academy** is the **2021-22 Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Whitehead is the fifth Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Montverde Academy.

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 Whitehead as Florida's 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, Whitehead 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-5, 185-pound senior guard had led the Eagles to a 19-4 record and a berth in the Geico High School Nationals tournament at the time of his selection. Whitehead averaged 17.1 points, 5.1 rebounds and 2.4 assists through 23 games. The 2022 Naismith High School Player of the Year, Whitehead is also a McDonald's All-American Game selection. He is ranked as the nation's No. 1 recruit in the Class of 2022 by Rivals.com.

A member of the Head of School Leadership Team at Montverde, Whitehead has volunteered locally as part of a fundraising campaign to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and he has donated his time as a basketball coach to special-needs children. "Dariq carries himself so well and is so respectful, but when the lights are on, he is a killer," said Luke Barnwell, head coach of Sunrise Christian (Kan.) Academy. "He is never afraid to step up and take the big shot and is a true two-way player."

Whitehead has maintained a weighted 3.32 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at Duke University 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.

Whitehead joins recent Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Players of the Year Caleb Houston (2020-21, Montverde Academy), Cade Cunningham (2019-20, Montverde Academy), Vernon Carey Jr. (2018-19, NSU University School), and R.J. Barrett (2017-18, Montverde 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, Whitehead 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. Whitehead 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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