

**VOLCANO VISTA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 **Ja'Kwon Hill** of **Volcano Vista High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade New Mexico Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Hill is the first Gatorade New Mexico Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Volcano Vista 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 Hill as New Mexico'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, Hill 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-2, 180-pound senior guard led the Hawks to a 29-0 record and the 5A state championship. Hill, who averaged 18.1 points, 6 rebounds and five assists per game, clicked for 17 points, 7 rebounds, 2 assists and 2 steals in Volcano Vista's 66-55 overtime win against No. 1 Las Cruces in the 5A final. He hit two free throws with four seconds remaining to send the game to overtime. On the season, the teen shot 61 percent from conventional field goal range, 45 percent from beyond the arc and 83 percent at the free throw line.

Hill has volunteered locally at food banks. He also has donated his time around the holidays by visiting with patients at Carrie Tingley children's hospital at the University of New Mexico. "He's very strong physically, which makes him almost impossible to keep in front of defensively," said Travis Julian, head coach at Los Lunas High School. "He is a dual-threat player—he can hurt you with the 3-ball and can get to the rim and finish."

Hill has maintained a 4.01 weighted GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided on 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.

Hill joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Boys Basketball Players of the Year William "Deuce" Benjamin (2020-21, Las Cruces High School), Joziah Ramos (2019-20, Atrisco Heritage Academy High School), David Patterson (2018-19, Rio Rancho High School), and Anthony Chavez (2017-18, Valley 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, Hill 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. Hill 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).