

**POCA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 **Isaac McKneely** of **Poca High School** is the **2021-22 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. McKneely is the second Gatorade West Virginia Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Poca 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 McKneely as West Virginia'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, McKneely 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-4, 180-pound guard had led the Dots to a 23-1 record and a berth in the AA State Tournament at the time of his selection. He averaged 20.8 points, 6.2 rebounds and 3.8 assists per game through 23 games. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year is ranked No. 1 in West Virginia 2022 by PrepHoops.com and is ranked nationally No. 68 by ESPN, No. 55 by 247Sports and No. 70 by Rivals.com.

McKneely has volunteered locally as part of Red Cross blood-donation drives and at a church food pantry. He also has donated his time as a coach and counselor at local youth basketball camps and leagues. "McKneely's the best player in the state," said Hurricane High School head coach Lance Sutherland. "His elevation on his jump shot is insane. In a different system, he would average 40 a game, easily. He plays pretty good defense, too."

McKneely has maintained a 4.24 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Virginia 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 McKneely joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Boys Basketball Players of the Year Jaemyn Brakefield (2019-20, 2018-19, & 2017-18, Huntington-St. Joseph Prep), 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, McKneely 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. McKneely 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.

###