

**SIERRA CANYON SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CALIFORNIA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 8, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Juju Watkins** of **Sierra Canyon School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade California Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Watkins is the first Gatorade California Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Sierra Canyon 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 California's best high school girls basketball player. Now one of three finalists 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 Kiki Rice (2021-22, Sidwell Friends School, Washington, D.C.), Paige Bueckers (2019-20, Hopkins High School, Minn.), Nneka Ogwumike (2007-08, CyFair High School, Texas), and Candace Parker (2003-04 & 2002-03, Naperville Central High School, Ill.).

At the time of her selection, the 6-foot-2 senior guard had led the Trailblazers to a 30-0 record and the quarterfinals of the state Open Division tournament. The state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, Watkins averaged 28.1 points, 14.0 rebounds, 3.7 assists, 2.6 steals and 1.5 blocks through 30 games for the CIF-Southern Section Open Division champions. A McDonald's All-American, she led the USA Basketball Women's U17 National Team to the FIBA World Cup championship this past summer, earning tournament MVP honors. She's ranked as the nation's No. 1 prospect in the Class of 2023 by ESPN and scored a career-high 60 points on Jan. 31 against Sherman Oaks Notre Dame High School.

Watkins has volunteered locally on behalf of Hands for Hope, Shoes for Souls and the Watts Labor Community Action Committee as well as toy donation drives, a food bank and youth basketball camps. "It's no secret that high level elite players can take over a game with the ball in their hands, but Juju can dominate the game with or without the ball," said Sue Phillips, head coach at Archbishop Mitty High School. "A lot has been said about Juju's ability to score at all three levels. No doubt, it's fantastic. But there's not enough praise for her ability to pass, rebound and wreak havoc. She's the total package."

Watkins has maintained a 3.72 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at University of Southern California 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 Watkins joins recent Gatorade California Girls Basketball Players of the Year Brooke Demetre (2020-21, Mater Dei High School), Te-Hina Paopao (2019-20, La Jolla Country Day School), and Haley Jones (2018-19, Archbishop Mitty High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

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.