

**ST. LUKE'S SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT 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 **Mackenzie Nelson** of **St. Luke's School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Connecticut Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Nelson is the first Gatorade Connecticut Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Luke's 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 Nelson as Connecticut's best high school girls basketball player. Nelson 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 5-foot-9 senior guard had led the Storm to a 20-2 record and the No. 1 seed in the New England Preparatory Athletic Council Class B tournament. Nelson averaged 19.1 points, 4.5 rebounds, 4.5 steals and 4.0 assists through 22 games. She was named the NEPSAC Class B Defensive Player of the Year.

Also the Connecticut Girls Basketball Gatorade Player of the Year in 2021-22, Nelson has volunteered locally with several basketball camps, including with the Boys Scouts of America, and she was named to the Junior NBA's Court of Leaders Committee. "Mackenzie is easily one of the best players I've ever coached," said St. Luke's School coach Matthew Ward. "One thing that separates her from other really good players is her ability to dominate games on both ends of the floor. She may be the best defender in all of New England, not just Connecticut."

Nelson has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at Virginia Tech 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 Nelson joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Girls Basketball Players of the Year Shailyn Pinkney (2020-21, East Hartford High School), Allie Palmieri (2019-20, Greens Farms Academy), and Makenzie Helms (2018-19, East Haven 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.

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