

**WEST LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE IOWA 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 **Kelsey Joens** of **West Liberty High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Iowa Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Joens is the first Gatorade Iowa Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from West Liberty 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 Joens as Iowa's best high school girls basketball player. Joens 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.).

The 5-foot-10 senior guard averaged 24.6 points and 11.9 rebounds per game this past season, leading the Comets (17-7) to the Class 3A regional final. Joens also averaged 4.0 steals, 3.5 assists and 1.2 blocks en route to recording 13 double-doubles and one triple-double in 24 games. A two-time Class 4A First Team All-State selection at Iowa City High, Joens transferred as a senior to play her final season for her sister, Courtney, the West Liberty High School head coach. Another sister, Ashley, was the state's 2017-18 Gatorade Girls Basketball Player of the Year.

Joens has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army. She has also donated her time to an elementary school literacy program and as a youth basketball coach. "Kelsey moves well without the ball, making it hard to locate her when playing our zone," said Ross DeLong, head coach of Durant High School. "What I really like about her is she really tries getting everyone involved. She has really great court vision and pushes the ball up the floor."

Joens has maintained a weighted 3.61 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at Iowa State 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.

Joens joins recent Gatorade Iowa Girls Basketball Players of the Year Hannah Stuelke (2021-22, Washington High School), Katie Dinnebier (2020-21, Waukee High School), and Caitlin Clark (2019-20 & 2018-19, Dowling Catholic 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.

###