

**SACRED HEART ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE KENTUCKY GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (March 8, 2023) — In its 38<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **ZaKiyah Johnson** of **Sacred Heart Academy** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Kentucky Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Johnson is the second Gatorade Kentucky Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Sacred Heart Academy.

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 Johnson as Kentucky's best high school girls basketball player. Johnson 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot sophomore guard and forward had led the Valkyries to a 31-3 record and a berth in the 7th Region Tournament championship game at the time of her selection. Johnson averaged 22.0 points, 8.3 rebounds, 3.5 assists, 2.2 steals and 1.0 blocks per game through 34 games. Ranked as the nation's No. 2 recruit in the Class of 2025 by ESPN.com, she was also the 2022 MaxPreps National Freshman of the Year.

Johnson has volunteered locally on behalf of both the Kiwanis Club and the Salvation Army. She has also donated her time as a youth basketball coach and referee. "ZaKiyah is one of the best defenders I have ever seen," said Stacy Pendleton, head coach of Assumption High School. "She can guard 1-5 at any level and create havoc defensively. This is my 21st season and she would be pick No. 1 of all the players I have seen in Kentucky."

Johnson has maintained a 3.41 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school 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 Johnson joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Girls Basketball Players of the Year Brooklynn Miles (2020-21, Franklin County High School), and Maddie Scherr (2019-20 & 2018-19, Larry A. Ryle 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](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).

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