

**ALBUQUERQUE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 **Leilani Love of Albuquerque High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Love is the second Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Albuquerque 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 Love as New Mexico's best high school girls basketball player. Love 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 6-foot-1 senior center had led the Bulldogs to a 25-2 record and the No. 9 seed in the 5A state tournament at the time of her selection. Love averaged 19.3 points, 9.2 rebounds, 1 assist, 2.4 steals and 1.4 blocks per game. She eclipsed 1,000 points for her career and was named the 5A District 5 Player of the Year.

Love has volunteered locally collecting food for the Roadrunner Food Bank and has donated socks, basketball shoes and clothes to children at Barrett House and Joy Junction, local family homeless shelters. She also has donated her time as a fundraiser for the Breast Cancer Association. "She was a definite matchup problem for us," said Marisa Cogan, head coach at La Cueva High School. "She hurt us inside and outside, and she also contested shots and rebounded well on the defensive end of the floor."

Love has maintained a 3.2 weighted GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at Colorado State University-Pueblo 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.

Love joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Players of the Year Juliana Aragon (2021-22, Bernalillo High School), Viane Cumber (2020-21 & 2019-20, Sandia High School), and Carsyn Boswell (2018-19, Carlsbad 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.

###