

**SPRING GARDEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 14, 2024) — In its 39th year of honoring the nation's most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Ace Austin** of **Spring Garden High School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Austin is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Spring Garden High School.

The award, which celebrates the nation's top high school athletes for excellence on the court, in the classroom and in the community, distinguishes Austin as Alabama's best high school girls basketball player. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport, touting an all-star group of alumni that includes Candace Parker (2003-04, 2002-03 & 2001-02, Naperville Central High School, Ill.), Paige Bueckers (2017-18, Hopkins High School, Minn.) and Juju Watkins (2022-23 & 2021-22, Sierra Canyon School, Calif.).

The 5-foot-7 junior guard led the Panthers to a 33-1 record and a second straight Class 1A state championship this past season. Austin averaged 20.2 points, 7.2 rebounds, 7.1 assists and 3.6 steals per game, including 35 points and nine rebounds in a 63-31 win over Marion County High School in the state final. The 2023 Class 1A Player of the Year, she is ranked as the nation's No. 43 recruit in the Class of 2025 by Prospects Nation. She concluded her junior year with 2,958 points in her prep basketball career.

A two-year officer in her school's Family, Career and Community Leaders of America chapter, Austin is a member of the yearbook staff and an Open House guide for her school. She has volunteered locally with the Spring Garden High School Beta Club and as a youth basketball coach. "Ace is not only an exceptional scorer, but she is a true floor general," said Courtney Screws, head coach of Handley High School. "She hurt us defensively as well. She is able to impact so many facets of the game."

Austin has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Alabama beginning in the fall of 2025.

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.

Austin joins recent Gatorade Alabama Girls Basketball Players of the Year Reniya Kelly (2022-23, Hoover High School), Samiya Steele (2021-22, Hazel Green High School), Sara Puckett (2020-21, Muscle Shoals High School) and Sarah Ashlee Barker (2019-20, Spain Park High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

As part of Gatorade's commitment to breaking down barriers in sport, every Player of the Year also receives a grant to donate to a social impact partner. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$4.9 million across more than 1,600 organizations.

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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