

**GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 **Sarah Strong** of **Grace Christian School** is the **2023-24 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Strong is the first Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Grace Christian 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 Strong as North Carolina'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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-2 senior forward led the Crusaders to a 30-0 record and a second straight North Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association Class 2A state championship this past season. Strong averaged 21.0 points, 16.8 rebounds and 4.6 assists per game, and she clicked for 30 points and 21 rebounds in an 83-33 win over High Point Christian School in the state final. Ranked as the nation's No. 1 recruit in the Class of 2024 by both Prospects Nation and espnW, she concluded her prep basketball career with 1,951 points and 1,363 rebounds.

Strong has volunteered locally as part of community beautification projects and as a youth basketball coach. She has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through her church. "Sarah is an amazing player," said Daniel McRae, head coach of Wesleyan Christian Academy. "Her size, strength, court awareness, basketball IQ and smooth stroke make her a once-in-a-decade talent. She makes the game so much easier for everyone."

Strong has maintained a 3.68 GPA in the classroom. She remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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 Strong joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Players of the Year Indya Nivar (2021-22, Apex Friendship High School) and Saniya Rivers (2020-21 & 2019-20, Eugene Ashley 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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