

WATAUGA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (March 13, 2025) — In its 40th year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Kate Sears of Watauga High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Sears is the first Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Watauga High School.

Gatorade Player of the Year is the top honor in high school sports, celebrating the nation’s best high school athletes for their success on the court, in the classroom and in the community. The award distinguishes Sears as North Carolina's best high school girls basketball player, and she joins an impressive group of alumni that spans CEOs, coaches and star athletes such as Candace Parker (2002-03 & 2003-04, Naperville Central High School, Illinois), Paige Bueckers (2019-20, Hopkins High School, Minnesota) and Joyce Edwards (2023-24, Camden High School, South Carolina).

The 5-foot-9 senior point guard averaged 27.2 points, 13.1 rebounds and 9.3 assists per game this past season, leading the Pioneers (22-6) to the Class 4A state quarterfinals. Sears recorded 13 triple-doubles in 28 contests, including one game where she scored 50 points and another when she tallied 43 points, 21 rebounds and 15 assists. A four-time Northwestern Conference Player of the Year, she concluded her prep basketball career with 2,613 points.

A member of her school’s chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Sears has volunteered locally as a peer math tutor and as a youth basketball coach. She has also donated her time to multiple community service initiatives through Athletes for Good. “Kate Sears has been sensational this season,” said Steven Phillips, head coach of North Wilkes High School. “As an opposing coach, I can confirm she is impossible to game-plan for. She is a true 5-foot-9 point guard, but she jumps center and plays the middle of the 2-3 zone. Her court vision and decision-making are as good as anyone I have ever seen.”

Sears has maintained a weighted 4.54 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play basketball at Virginia Tech this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states across 12 different high school sports - 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.

Sears joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Girls Basketball Players of the Year Sarah Strong (2023-24 & 2022-23, Grace Christian School), Indya Nivar (2021-22, Apex Friendship High School) and Saniya Rivers (2020-21, 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, the Gatorade Player of the Year program has provided more than \$5.6 million in grants to winners across more than 2,000 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 Instagram at [instagram.com/Gatorade](https://www.instagram.com/Gatorade), Facebook at [facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) and X(Twitter) at x.com/Gatorade.

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