

**SACRED HEART ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 **ZaKiyah Johnson** of **Sacred Heart Academy** is the **2024-25 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.

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 Johnson as Kentucky'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).

At the time of her selection, the 6-foot senior guard/forward had led the Valkyries to a 31-3 record along with the 7th Region title and a berth in the state tournament. Johnson averaged 21.3 points and 7 rebounds through 34 games while shooting 54.7 percent from the floor. The McDonald’s All-American and Naismith All-America Honorable Mention also won a gold medal with the US women’s under-18 team at the 2024 FIBA U18 AmeriCup.

Johnson has volunteered locally at various youth and summer basketball camps as a coach and official. She has also donated her time at the Goodwill Opportunity Center. “What makes her so formidable is her competitive nature and ability to take over the game defensively,” said Stacy Pendleton, head coach at Assumption High School. “I have been in Kentucky as a head coach for over 20 years and [Johnson] is the best I have seen or coached against.”

Johnson has maintained a 3.15 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a written letter of athletic aid to play basketball at Louisiana State University 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.

Four-time winner Johnson joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Girls Basketball Players of the Year Brooklynn Miles (2020-21, Franklin County 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.