

**SANDIA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE NEW MEXICO GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (March 13, 2025) — In its 40<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s most elite high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Sydney Benally** of **Sandia High School** is the **2024-25 Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Benally is the third Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Sandia 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 Benally as New Mexico’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 5-foot-9 senior point guard had led the Matadors to a 27-1 record and the quarterfinals of the 5A state tournament. The state’s returning Gatorade Player of the Year, Benally averaged 20.2 points, 5.7 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 3.3 steals through 28 games. She was named 5A District 2 Player of the Year and was a McDonald’s All-American nominee.

Benally has volunteered locally at the Shiprock Chapter Navajo Nation by serving food to community members during the holidays. She has also donated her time to the Fenton Fundamental Academy, where she mentors and coaches elementary school students. “She can play point guard, shooting guard, small forward, or any position needed and do it well,” said Manny Vigil, head coach at Los Lunas High School. “She always makes it easier for all her teammates. Her IQ on both offense and defense is exceptional.”

Benally has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play basketball on scholarship at Brigham Young University beginning 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.

Two-time winner Benally joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Players of the Year Leilani Love (2022-23, Albuquerque High School), Juliana Aragon (2021-22, Bernalillo High School) and Viane Cumber (2020-21, Sandia 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](http://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](https://x.com/Gatorade).