



# NAISMITH

— HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL —  
COURAGE AWARD

## **MinZheng Wahlers and Jadyn Diaz Named Winners of Jersey Mike's Naismith High School Basketball Courage Award**

*2023 winners share stories of adversity – represent communities in Colorado and Northern California*

(ATLANTA – March 8, 2023) – MinZheng “MZ” Wahlers of Golden View Classical Academy in Golden, Colo., and Jadyn Diaz of Ukiah High School in Ukiah, Calif., have been named the winners of the fourth annual Jersey Mike's Naismith High School Basketball Courage Award. The Atlanta Tipoff Club, which administers the Naismith Awards, determined Wahlers and Diaz stood out above the rest after evaluating hundreds of nominations nationwide. The Naismith Awards are the most prestigious national honors in high school and college basketball.

Diaz has dealt with a rare bone disease throughout her life that causes her bones to grow unintendedly, resulting in multiple surgeries. The operations cut back bones that grow larger than her body can handle. Her most recent surgery included the removal of two inches of a rib that punctured her lung. She recovered quicker than expected and rejoined the girls' basketball team in a limited capacity. To add to her misfortune, she lost her mom to cancer a couple of years ago.

Wahlers has also faced continuous adversity in his life. Born with a Cleft lip and palate in China, he was immediately abandoned at a police station, where doctors conducted emergency surgery to close his upper palate. After the operation, he was without a home. He was eventually fostered by a local family and began to focus on basketball.

“Beyond the basketball court, MZ and Jadyn have demonstrated incredible courage throughout their lives and have become tremendous role models in their communities,” said Eric Oberman, executive director of the Atlanta Tipoff Club. “This award evaluates an individual as a well-rounded person, not just for their on-court talent, and both MZ and Jadyn exemplify what it means to win the Jersey Mike's Naismith Courage Award.”

The Jersey Mike's Naismith High School Basketball Courage Award recognizes a high school basketball player who has consistently gone above and beyond throughout the basketball season and has demonstrated courage in their approach to their team, school, and community.

Jersey Mike's will make a \$2,000 donation to each player's high school basketball program in their honor and reward each winner with an additional \$2,000 per student. Winners will be recognized at their school and through a video tribute shared across the Naismith Trophy and Jersey Mike's websites and social media accounts.

“We’ve been thrilled to help tell the stories of so many amazing and courageous student-athletes across the country,” said Rich Hope, chief marketing officer of Jersey Mike’s Franchise Systems, Inc. “We want to congratulate Jady and MZ for winning the 2023 Jersey Mike’s Naismith High School Basketball Courage Awards. Their stories inspire all of us.”

For more information about the winners, visit [www.astudentabove.com](http://www.astudentabove.com).

**ABOUT THE ATLANTA TIPOFF CLUB** Founded during the 1956-57 season, the Atlanta Tipoff Club is committed to promoting the game of basketball and recognizing the outstanding accomplishments of those who make the game so exciting. The Atlanta Tipoff Club administers the Naismith Awards, the most prestigious national honors in all of college and high school basketball. Named in honor of Dr. James Naismith, inventor of the game of basketball, the family of Naismith Awards annually recognizes the most outstanding men’s and women’s college and high school basketball players and coaches. Other Naismith Awards are presented to the men’s and women’s college basketball defensive players of the year, as well as lifetime achievement awards to basketball officials and outstanding contributors to the game. UCLA’s Lew Alcindor received the first Jersey Mike’s Naismith Trophy in 1969, while the late Anne Donovan (Old Dominion) was the inaugural women’s recipient in 1983. Corporate partners of the Naismith Awards include Jersey Mike’s and Werner Ladder.

**ABOUT JERSEY MIKE’S SUBS** Jersey Mike’s Subs, with nearly 2,500 locations nationwide, serves authentic fresh sliced/fresh grilled subs on in-store freshly baked bread — the same recipe it started with in 1956. Passion for giving in Jersey Mike’s local communities is reflected in its mission statement “Giving...making a difference in someone’s life.” For more information, please visit [jerseymikes.com](http://jerseymikes.com) or follow us on Facebook ([facebook.com/jerseymikes](https://facebook.com/jerseymikes)), Instagram ([instagram.com/jerseymikes](https://instagram.com/jerseymikes)), and Twitter ([twitter.com/jerseymikes.com](https://twitter.com/jerseymikes.com)).

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