

# Justin Williams and Xzeria Denson Named Winners of Jersey Mike's Naismith High School Basketball Courage Award



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Justin Williams of Foundation Academy in Winter Garden, Fla., and Xzeria Denson of Ridgeland High School in Ridgeland, Miss., have been named the winners of the third annual Jersey Mike's Naismith High School Basketball Courage Award, according to the Atlanta Tipoff Club.

The Jersey Mike's Naismith High School Basketball Courage Award recognizes one male and one female 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. Hundreds of coaches and athletic directors nominated players from around the country.

Born with Aperts syndrome, Williams has undergone 12 surgeries throughout his childhood. His condition results in his outer extremities being fused together and not separated in the womb. Five of his surgeries have been on his head. Despite his challenges, Williams is a leader on the basketball court and never makes excuses or complains about his struggles. His coach applauded Williams for his character as well as his basketball IQ. He is a mentor for the younger players and an inspiration to teammates. To view a tribute video for Williams, click [HERE](#).

Denson overcame significant lower-body injuries each of her four years during her high school basketball career while navigating obstacles in her personal life. After an ankle injury that jeopardized her senior year, Denson attended physical therapy before school in order to attend practices in the afternoon and return to game action before her team's district competition. While navigating obstacles in early childhood, Denson learned how to work hard and be a leader inside the school and out. Denson's coach describes Denson as the hardest worker and an incredible leader on and off the court. To view a tribute video for Denson, click [HERE](#).

"Beyond the basketball court, Xzeria and Justin display courage every day of their lives, and we are honored to recognize them as the winners of the Jersey Mike's Naismith High School Basketball Courage Award," said Eric Oberman, executive director of the Atlanta Tipoff Club. "They are role models in their schools, communities, and for people across the country, as their remarkable stories spread through this award."

Ten finalists, and ultimately the two winners, were chosen by a Board of Selectors, including journalists, former Naismith winners, and Atlanta Tipoff Club board members. Jersey Mike's will donate to the winners' high school basketball programs in honor of Williams and Denson.

“We want to thank all of the coaches and athletic directors who made nominations from all over the country on behalf of their incredibly courageous players,” said Rich Hope, chief marketing officer, Jersey Mike’s Franchise Systems, Inc. “Reading their stories of strength and resilience was inspiring. We want to congratulate Xzeria and Justin for winning this year’s Jersey Mike’s Naismith High School Basketball Courage Award and celebrate all the nominees across the country.”

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 more than 2,000 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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