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**TWO POINT GUARDS EARN 2016 MORGAN WOOTTEN PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

*McDonald's All American Games players Lonzo Ball, Crystal Dangerfield recognized for accomplishments on and off the court*

**OAK BROOK, Ill. (March 9, 2016)** – Two standout high school point guards and 2016 [McDonald's All American Games](#) players can now add another honor to their long list of accomplishments. Seniors Lonzo Ball and Crystal Dangerfield were named 2016 Morgan Wootten Players of the Year today.

Lonzo Ball of Chino Hills High School in Chino Hills, California, and Crystal Dangerfield of Blackman High School in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, earned the award by displaying outstanding character, showing leadership and embodying the values of a student-athlete. McDonald's established the award in 1997 to pay tribute to Wootten's accomplished teaching and coaching Hall of Fame career.

Both Ball and Dangerfield started playing basketball at the age of 5, leading to successful high school careers and the opportunity to follow their passions at the collegiate level.

"Lonzo and Crystal exemplify what it means to be driven and committed to achieving their goals in both academics and athletics," said Wootten. "These players have already made a difference for their communities and teammates, and I'm confident they'll continue making an impact on the game."

**A player with heart and smarts**

At 6 feet 6 inches tall and 189 pounds, Ball is ranked by ESPN as the No. 1 point guard in the nation and No. 5 overall player. As the 20th male recipient of the Morgan Wootten award, he joins previous honorees including Ben Simmons (2015), Jabari Parker (2013), Kevin Love (2007), LeBron James (2003) and Jay Williams (1999). Ball beat out four other finalists and fellow McDonald's All Americans:

- Edrice Adebayo, High Point Christian Academy in High Point, North Carolina
- Josh Jackson, Justin-Siena High School/Prolific Prep in Napa, California
- Malik Monk, Bentonville High School in Bentonville, Arkansas
- Jayson Tatum, Chaminade College Prep in St. Louis, Missouri

In addition to his ESPN rankings, Ball has earned accolades that include being named a California Interscholastic Federation Finalist and State Regional Finalist as a sophomore, again earning the State Regional Finalist distinction as a junior. In both 2012 and 2013, Ball was named Sierra League Champion and California Player of the Year as both a sophomore and junior. Ball signed a letter of intent to carry on his career at UCLA.

In the classroom, Ball has proven his dedication to academics with a 3.77 cumulative GPA and a full roster of college prep courses. Beyond scoring high on tests, Ball is engaged in classroom discussions and serves as an example to other students.

On his own time, Ball is an active volunteer at youth basketball camps, where he helps kids find proper technique, officiates their games and encourages them to balance sports with school.

Beginning in 8th grade, Ball coached a travel team for two years, devoting six hours per week to practicing with his team, along with four to six hours on weekends to coach games. This experience help Ball develop into a better role model, he said.

His principal at Chino Hills High School describes Ball as a genuine, gracious student who brings poise and heart to everything he does.

“Lonzo is one of those students that brightens a campus by just being himself,” Principal Isabel Fernandez Brenes said in a nomination letter.

To Ball, the honor of receiving the Morgan Wootten Player of the Year award is a testament to the support he’s received from his family, coaches and teammates.

“Words cannot express how honored I am to be chosen as the 2016 McDonald’s All American Games Player of the Year,” Ball said. “This honor is shared by so many people in my life. I have great coaches, I’ve played with great teammates, I have a family that believes in me, and I have fun playing basketball every day. There have been so many basketball successes along the way, but this one is definitely one of my greatest achievements.”

### **A leader who gives back**

At 5 feet 6 inches tall, Dangerfield was named Tennessee’s Miss Basketball 2015 and was recognized as a Miss Basketball finalist in 2014. She is the 15th female winner of the Morgan Wootten award, joining previous winners that include Katie Lou Samuelson (2015), Breanna Stewart (2012), Elena Delle Donne (2008), Maya Moore (2007) and Candace Parker (2004). Dangerfield competed against four other finalists and fellow McDonald’s All Americans:

- Natalie Chou, Plano West High School in Plano, Texas
- Lauren Cox, Flower Mound High School in Flower Mound, Texas
- Joyner Holmes, Cedar Hill High School in Cedar Hills, Texas
- Jackie Young, Princeton High School in Princeton, Indiana

Dangerfield's accomplishments include being named Tennessee Player of the Year in 2015 and 2014. She also gained international experience as a key member on the 2013 U16 Gold Medal USA National Team and 2015 U17 Gold Medal USA National Team. Dangerfield signed a letter of intent to play basketball at University of Connecticut.

Dangerfield works just as hard in the classroom as she does on the court, earning a 3.8 GPA with a course load of advanced honors and dual enrollment classes to earn college credit. She is currently on track to graduate from Blackman High School with Honors and Distinction.

During her down time, Dangerfield gives back to the community through charitable programs like Read Across America, Coaches vs. Cancer and Hoops for Heart. She also serves in a leadership role for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Strong character and a positive mindset set Dangerfield apart, her principal at Blackman High School said.

"Crystal has a can-do attitude in everything she does," Principal Leisa Justus said in a nomination letter. "She complements those around her. She encourages, she coaches, she sets high expectations – in everything she does."

Dangerfield describes earning the Morgan Wootten Player of the Year award as a prestigious honor.

"I'm glad to be a part of the McDonald's All American Games and to be associated with previous Player of the Year winners like Maya Moore and Ivory Latta who came before me," Dangerfield said.

### **Next up for Ball, Dangerfield**

Ball and Dangerfield will be honored for their Morgan Wootten Player of the Year awards at a ceremony on March 29 in Chicago. These athletes will join 46 other high school standouts at the McDonald's All American Games on Wednesday, March 30, at the United Center in Chicago. The Girls Game tips off at 5:30 p.m., followed by the Boys Game at 8 p.m.

Tickets to the 2016 McDonald's All American Games are available now through Ticketmaster or charge-by-phone at 1-866-909-GAME. Tickets start at \$10 and include free parking. Net proceeds from the Games benefit Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC). The Games have raised more than \$11 million for RMHC since 1978.

For more information about the McDonald's All American Games, POWERADE® Jam Fest or game week activities in Chicago, please visit [www.mcdaag.com](http://www.mcdaag.com) and follow us [@McDAAG](https://twitter.com/McDAAG) on Twitter and [@McDAAG](https://www.instagram.com/McDAAG) on Instagram.

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### **About Coach Morgan Wootten**

During Wootten's 43-year career as head basketball coach at DeMatha High School in Hyattsville, Md., he earned a reputation for being an excellent basketball coach and mentor. In addition to his five national high school championship titles and 33 conference championships, Wootten had the unique distinction of having every DeMatha senior player receive a four-year college scholarship during his final 30 years of coaching. Now retired, Wootten was the first basketball coach at any level to reach 1,200 wins. He is the author of numerous books and is a famed basketball speaker and mentor. Coach Wootten has served as head of the selection committee for the McDonald's All American Games since its inception in 1977.

### **About McDonald's USA**

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