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**MONTVERDE ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® FLORIDA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 8, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced R.J. Barrett of Montverde Academy as its 2017-18 Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Barrett is the second Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Montverde Academy.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Barrett as Florida's best high school boys basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced in March, Barrett joins an elite alumni association of past state boys basketball award winners, including Karl-Anthony Towns (2012-13 & 2013-14, St. Joseph HS, N.J.), Dwight Howard (2003-04, SW Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.), Chris Bosh (2001-02, Lincoln HS, Texas), Paul Pierce (1994-95, Inglewood HS, Calif.), Chauncey Billups (1993-94 & 1994-95, George Washington HS, Colo.) and Jason Kidd (1991-92, St. Joseph Notre Dame HS, Calif.).

The 6-foot-7, 200-pound senior guard has led the Eagles to a 32-0 record and the No. 1 spot in the USA Today Super 25 Expert Rankings. Barrett has averaged 28.7 points, 8.5 rebounds, 4.5 assists, two blocks and 1.5 steals a game for the Eagles, who will play in the GEICO High School Basketball Nationals quarterfinals, scheduled for March 29. A McDonald's All-American, Naismith Trophy winner, and the No. 1 prospect in the country according to the ESPN 100, Barrett starred last summer for Canada's U19 team and led that squad to its first FIBA World Championship medal.

Barrett has volunteered locally with the Montverde Lower School Basketball Buddies program, the St. Jude's Children's Hospital and on behalf of the South Lake Church of Christ in Clermont, Fla. "R.J.'s combination of size, strength, power and skill—along with his aggressive, 'down-hill' mentality—make him a LeBron James-like opponent at the high school level," said Jonathan McClintock, head coach at Central Florida Christian Academy. "He is the difference-maker on that team."

Barrett has maintained a 3.14 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at Duke 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 that sanction high school 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 work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Barrett joins recent Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Players of the Year Chaundee Brown (2016-17, The First Academy), Tony Bradley (2015-16, Bartow High School), Ben Simmons (2014-15, Montverde Academy), Joel Berry (2013-14, 2012-13 & 2011-12, Lake Highland Preparatory School), Austin Rivers (2010-11, Winter Park High School), Brandon Knight (2009-10 & 2008-09, Pine Crest School), Ray Shipman (2007-08, Monsignor Pace High School), and Nick Calathes (2006-07, Lake Howell High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, R.J. will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.

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