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**HARDING UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA BOYS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 11, 2017) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Quavaris Crouch of Harding University High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade North Carolina Football Player of the Year. Crouch is the first Gatorade North Carolina Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Harding University High School.

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 Crouch as North Carolina's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Crouch joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Mitchell Trubisky (2012-13, Mentor High School, Ohio), Greg Olsen (2002-03, Wayne Hills High School, N.J.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06 Highland Park High School, Texas), Harrison Smith (2006-07 Knoxville Catholic High School, Tenn.), Latavius Murray (2007-08, Onondaga High School, N.Y.), Brock Osweiler (2008-09, Flathead High School, Mont.) and Leonard Fournette (2014-15 & 2012-13, St. Augustine High School, La.).

The 6-foot-2, 230-pound junior running back and linebacker had led the Rams to a 13-1 record and a berth in the Class 4A state championship game at the time of his selection. Crouch has rushed for 3,142 yards and 31 touchdowns on 287 carries through 14 games, also recording 42 tackles and 14 sacks on defense. A First Team All-State selection, he also earned Conference Player of the Year and All-Charlotte Observer First Team honors.

A devoted member of his church community and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Crouch has volunteered as a peer mentor in his school. "Quavaris Crouch has to be one of the most imposing running backs I've seen in a long time," said Travis Witherspoon, head coach at Berry High. "He has tremendous balance and if you let him get to the second level there aren't many players who can catch him in a foot race."

Crouch has maintained a 3.31 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school next 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.

Crouch joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Football Players of the Year Zamir White (2016-17, Scotland High School), Chazz Surratt (2015-16, East Lincoln High School), Josh Ladowski (2014-15, Lake Norman High School), Will Grier (2013-14 & 2012-13, Davidson Day School), Keith Marshall (2011-12, Millbrook High School), Stephone Anthony (2010-11, Anson High School), and Christian LeMay (2009-10, Butler High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Crouch 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/>.