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**PINNACLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® ARIZONA 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 Nico Mannion of Pinnacle High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Arizona Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Mannion is the third Gatorade Arizona Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Pinnacle 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 Mannion as Arizona'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, Mannion 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-3, 155-pound sophomore point guard led the Pioneers to the first state championship in program history, capping a 24-7 season with a win in the Class 6A title game. Mannion averaged 23 points, 6.1 assists, 4.5 rebounds and two steals per game. A MaxPreps Freshman All-American last year, he totaled 55 points in the final two games of the campaign.

A volunteer coach at local youth basketball clinics, Mannion has donated his time to Out of the Darkness Walks for mental health awareness and suicide prevention. "(Nico) can obviously score the ball, but what separates him is his ability to share the ball, and make his teammates better," said Jonathan Rother, head coach at Chandler High. "He's also a very active defender and seems to value getting stops. When the best player on the team defends as well as he does, it makes the rest of the team want to defend, too."

Mannion has maintained a weighted 3.94 GPA in the classroom. He will begin his junior year of high school in the 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.

Mannion joins recent Gatorade Arizona Boys Basketball Players of the Year Alex Barcello (2016-17 & 2014-15, Corona del Sol High School), Mitch Lightfoot (2015-16, Gilbert Christian High School), Dorian Pickens (2013-14, Pinnacle High School), Casey Benson (2012-13, Corona del Sol High School), Tim Derksen (2011-12, Amphitheater High School), Jordan Baker (2010-11, Tempe High School), Corey Hawkins (2009-10 & 2008-09, Estrella Foothills High School), Taylor Rohde (2007-08, Pinnacle High School), and Jerryd Bayless (2006-07, St. Mary's High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Nico 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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