

**Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729- 3685)**

**NEWTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® GEORGIA 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 Ashton Hagans of Newton High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Georgia Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Hagans is the first Gatorade Georgia Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Newton 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 Hagans as Georgia'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, Hagans 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-4, 180-pound junior guard led the Rams to a 27-4 record and the Class AAAAAAA state semifinals. Hagans averaged 20 points, 11 assists, eight rebounds and four steals a game while running the point. A two-time All-State selection and Georgia Mr. Basketball candidate, Hagans eclipsed 1,000 career points this season and was named Region 8-AAAAAAA Player of the Year.

In addition to participating in an annual Alzheimer's walk with his grandparents, Hagans has volunteered locally to raise awareness about children with leukemia. "He can pass it and score it," said Josh Grube, head coach at Westside High. "And Hagans is a great free throw shooter as well. That was our point of emphasis when we played them: keep Hagans off the line. He got there 14 times. He is physical and he can defend. He would get my vote for Player of the Year in Georgia."

Hagans has maintained a B average in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. He will begin his senior 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.

Hagans joins recent Gatorade Georgia Boys Basketball Players of the Year Wendell Carter (2016-17, Pace Academy), Alterique Gilbert (2015-16, Miller Grove High School), Jaylen Brown (2014-15, Wheeler High School), Isaiah Wilkins (2013-14, Greater Atlanta Christian School), Brannen Greene (2012-13, Tift County High School), Tony Parker (2011-12, Miller Grove High School), Shannon Scott (2010-11, Milton High School), Ryan Harrow (2009-10, Walton High School), Derrick Favors (2008-09 & 2007-08, South Atlanta High School), and Gani Lawal (2006-07, Norcross High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Ashton 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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