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**SCOTLANDVILLE MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® LOUISIANA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 8, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Ja'Vonte Smart of Scotlandville Magnet High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Smart is the first Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Scotlandville Magnet 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 Smart as Louisiana'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, Smart 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 state's two-time returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-4, 210-pound senior point guard had led the Hornets to a 28-5 record and a berth in the Division I state semifinals at the time of his selection. Smart averaged 33.4 points, 10.7 rebounds, 6.1 assists, 2.2 steals and 1.4 blocks through 33 games. One of six finalists for the MaxPreps National Player of the Year, Smart is a two-time Mr. Basketball winner and a three-time Louisiana Sports Writers Association Class 5A All-State honoree. He entered the state final four with 3,253 points in his prep basketball career.

Smart has volunteered locally as part of an elementary school literacy-outreach program and as a youth basketball coach and counselor. "Ja'Vonte is a great player," said Mark Cascio, head coach of Baton Rouge Catholic High. "He shoots it really well from beyond the arc with deep range. He gets to the basket and plays above the rim. He sees the floor well and he's very unselfish."

Smart has maintained a weighted 3.33 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at Louisiana State 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.

Three-time winner Smart joins Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Players of the Year Wayde Sims (2014-15, University Laboratory School), Trey Touchet (2013-14 & 2012-13, St. Thomas More High School), Ricardo Gathers (2011-12 & 2010-11, Riverside Academy), Matt Derenbecker (2009-10 & 2008-09, Metairie Park Country Day School), and Greg Monroe (2007-08 & 2006-07, Helen Cox High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Ja'Vonte 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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