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**WEST FARGO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® NORTH DAKOTA 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 Joe Pistorius of West Fargo High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade North Dakota Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Pistorius is the second Gatorade North Dakota Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from West Fargo 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 Pistorius as North Dakota'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, Pistorius 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, 165-pound senior guard has led the Packers to a 21-3 record and a berth in the Class A state quarterfinals, scheduled for March 8. Pistorius is averaging 22.5 points per game along with 5.4 rebounds, 4.5 assists and 2.9 steals. Already a three-time All-Eastern Dakota Conference selection, Pistorius was recently named the EDC Player of the Year.

A youth basketball camp volunteer who also runs one-on-one hoops sessions with local youth players, Pistorius also is a Book Buddy at the local elementary school, helping students with their reading capacity. Additionally, Pistorius is an active participant in the St. Andrew Lutheran Church's youth group and bible study class. "I could not be happier that Joe Pistorius is graduating," said Jeff Ralph, head coach at Wahpeton High. "I'm tired of playing against that kid. I think he's a great candidate to be Gatorade Player of the Year, from the standpoint of looking at what he does on the court as well as how he handles himself on the court. He's just a solid kid."

Pistorius has maintained a weighted 3.88 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Pistorius joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Boys Basketball Players of the Year Aanen Moody (2016-17 & 2015-16, Dickinson High School), Carter Kretchman (2014-15, Oak Grove Lutheran High School), Tanner Kretchman (2013-14, Davies High School), A.J. Jacobson (2012-13, Shanley High School), Dexter Werner (2011-12 & 2010-11, Bismarck High School), Nik Savageau (2009-10, Fargo North), Joe Hanstad (2008-09, Dickinson High School), Austin Dufault (2007-08, Killdeer High School), and Tate Kick (2006-07, Dickinson) among the state's list of former award winners.

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