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**VERMILLION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® SOUTH DAKOTA 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 A.J. Plitzuweit of Vermillion High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Plitzuweit is the first Gatorade South Dakota Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Vermillion 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 Plitzuweit as South 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, Plitzuweit 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-2, 175-pound senior guard led the Tanagers to a 13-9 record and the regional semifinals this past season. Plitzuweit averaged 33.9 points, 9.3 rebounds, 4.3 assists and 2.9 steals per game. The Dakota 12 Conference MVP, he was a First Team All-State honoree and a member of the Argus Leader First Five.

Plitzuweit has volunteered locally on behalf of youth basketball programs. "A.J. Plitzuweit is one of the best high school basketball players I've ever seen," said Paul McVey, head coach at Lennox High. "His shooting range is phenomenal, his free throw stroke is impeccable and he might have the best pull-up game I've ever witnessed. He's incredibly efficient and he's also a terrific rebounder and defender."

Plitzuweit has maintained a 3.77 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at Augustana 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.

Plitzuweit joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Boys Basketball Players of the Year Matt Cartwright (2016-17, O'Gorman High School), Ty Hoglund (2015-16, Dell Rapids High School), Deng Geu (2014-15, Washington High School), Justin Decker (2013-14, Huron High School), Zach Hanson (2012-13 & 2011-12, TF Riggs High School), Zach Horstman (2010-11, Winner High School), Jared Hannigan (2009-10, Central High School), Tony Fiegen (2008-09, Madison High School), Louie Krogman (2007-08, White River High School), and Dale Moss (2006-07, Brandon Valley High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, A.J. 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/>.