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**HOPKINS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® MINNESOTA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 19, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Paige Bueckers of Hopkins High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Bueckers is the first Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Hopkins 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 Bueckers as Minnesota's best high school girls basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Basketball Player of the Year award announced in March, Bueckers joins an elite alumni association of past state girls basketball award-winners, including Maya Moore (2005-06 Collins Hill HS, Ga.), Rashanda McCants (2004-05, Asheville HS, N.C.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Diana Taurasi (1998-99 & 1999-00, Don Antonio Lugo HS, Calif.), Shyra Ely (1999-00, Ben Davis HS, Ind.) and Lisa Leslie (1988-89, Morningside HS, Calif.).

The 6-foot sophomore guard had led the Royals to a 26-3 record and a berth in the Class AAAA state quarterfinals at the time of her selection. Bueckers averaged 22.8 points, 6.9 assists, 5.8 rebounds and 4.1 steals through 29 games. A member of the USA Basketball Women's U16 National Team, she is a two-time All-Metro and All-State honoree and was named to the All-State Tournament Team as a sophomore.

Bueckers has volunteered locally on behalf of Feed My Starving Children and youth basketball camps. "Paige Bueckers is the best talent our state has seen in the 22 years I've been coaching basketball in Minnesota," said Matt Nilsen, head coach at Edina High. "She can score from anywhere, she guards the other team's best player. She has unmatched ball-handling skills, and her greatest asset is her passing. She sees the game like few others."

Bueckers has maintained a 3.72 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Bueckers joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Players of the Year Gabi Haack (2016-17, Elk River High School), Taylor Koenen (2015-16, Shakopee High School), Madison Guebert (2014-15, Eastview High School), Chase Coley (2013-14, Washburn High School), Rebekah Dahlman (2012-13, 2011-12 & 2010-11, Braham Area High School), Sari Noga (2009-10, Parkers Prairie), Tayler Hill (2008-09 & 2007-08, Minneapolis South High School), and Janessa Wolff (2006-07, Park Rapids Area High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Paige 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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