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**HELENA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® MONTANA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 19, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Jamie Pickens of Helena High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Pickens is the second Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Helena 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 Pickens as Montana'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, Pickens 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-2 junior post player led the Bengals to a 21-3 record and a second straight Class AA state championship this past season. Pickens averaged 15.0 points, 11.9 rebounds, 2.8 steals, 2.0 assists and 2.0 blocks per game. A 2016-17 Great Falls Tribune Super State selection and a First Team Class AA All-State honoree, she is rated as the nation's No. 59 recruit in the Class of 2019 by espnW.

Also an All-State volleyball and softball player, Pickens has volunteered locally as part of fundraising campaigns to benefit both cancer and mental health research. She has also donated her time as an elementary school teacher's aide and as a youth sports coach. "Jamie can do it all," said Michela Anderson, head coach of Big Sky High. "She can play inside, play outside, play defense, the list goes on. She makes it really hard to defend, and you always have to make sure she is located."

Pickens has maintained a 3.75 GPA in the classroom. She has made a verbal commitment to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Montana beginning in the fall of 2019.

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.

Pickens joins recent Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Players of the Year Sophia Stiles (2016-17 & 2015-16, Malta High School), Taylor Goligoski (2014-15 & 2012-13, Hamilton High School), Jill Barta (2013-14, Fairfield High School), Peyton Ferris (2011-12, Twin Bridges High School), Danielle Muri (2010-11, Billings West High School), Lexie Nelson (2009-10, Butte High School), Joslyn Tinkle (2008-09 & 2007-08, Big Sky High School), and Kirsten Tilleman (2006-07, Bozeman High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Jamie 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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