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**CANTON MCKINLEY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® OHIO 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 Kierstan Bell of Canton McKinley High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Ohio Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Bell is the first Gatorade Ohio Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Canton McKinley 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 Bell as Ohio'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, Bell 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-1 junior forward led the Lady Pups to a 23-2 record and the Division I district final this past season. Bell averaged 33.4 points, 10 rebounds, 3.5 assists, 5.1 steals and 1.3 blocks per game. A three-time first team All-Ohio selection and the 2016-17 winner of Ohio Ms. Basketball, Bell is rated as the nation's No. 4 recruit in the Class of 2019 by espnW.

Bell has donated her time as a coach for the Lady Pups' summer basketball camp and as a summer school gym teacher for middle school students. She has also volunteered locally reading books to elementary school students, participating in an anti-bullying campaign and fundraising for the "Pennies for Pajamas" project, the proceeds of which go toward the purchase of pajamas for homeless children. "I believe she's a great choice for player of the year," said Tracy Miller, head coach at Green High. "Kierstan Bell is a great player who causes teams a nightmare trying to defend her. She has it all and always plays so hard."

Bell has maintained a weighted 3.14 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school in the 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.

Bell joins recent Gatorade Ohio Girls Basketball Players of the Year Dee Bekelja (2016-17, Solon High School), Jensen Caretti (2015-16, River High School), Hallie Thome (2014-15, Chagrin Falls High School), Kelsey Mitchell (2013-14, Princeton High School), Bianca Quisenberry (2012-13, Tecumseh High School), Malina Howard (2011-12, Twinsburg High School), Ally Malott (2010-11, Madison High School), Amy Scullion (2009-10, Salem High School), Mikaela Ruef (2008-09, Beaver Creek High School), Shay Selby (2007-08, Regina High School), and Jantel Lavender (2006-07, Cleveland Central Catholic High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Kierstan 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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