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**ABERDEEN CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Paiton Burckhard of Aberdeen Central High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Burckhard is the second Gatorade South Dakota Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Aberdeen Central 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 Burckhard as South Dakota'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, Burckhard 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 senior forward has led the Golden Eagles to a 21-1 record and a spot in the Class AA state quarterfinals, scheduled for March 15. Burckhard is averaging 24.9 points, 11.2 rebounds, 3.0 assists and 2.0 blocks per game. A four-time Eastern South Dakota Conference All-Star, Burckhard is also a three-time Class AA All-State honoree and is the school's career scoring leader with 1,652 points.

A standout volleyball player who is also the school record-holder in the shot put, Burckhard has volunteered on behalf of the American Cancer Society. She has also donated her time locally as a freshman-orientation leader, a T-ball coach and as a speaker and reader at elementary schools. "Paiton is by far the best basketball player in our state," said Lynn Frederick, head coach at Brookings High. "I see a lot of players, and she would have my vote for Gatorade Player of the Year in the state."

Burckhard has maintained a weighted 3.69 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball at South Dakota State University beginning 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.

Burckhard joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Girls Basketball Players of the Year Myah Selland (2016-17, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket), Brianna Kusler (2015-16, Aberdeen Central High School), Sydney Palmer (2014-15, T.F. Riggs High School), Macy Miller (2013-14, Mitchell High School), Kerri Young (2012-13, Mitchell High School), Heidi Hoff (2011-12, Brandon Valley High School), Alex Kneeland (2010-11, Summit High School), Shaunteva Ashley (2009-10, Roosevelt High School), Sam Ostarello (2008-09, Stanley County High School), Alexis Yackley (2007-08, Sully Buttes High School), and Jill Young (2006-07, Mitchell Christian School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Paiton 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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