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MCEACHERN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE® GEORGIA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (March 15, 2019) — In its 34th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Sharife Cooper of McEachern High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Georgia Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Cooper is the first Gatorade Georgia Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from McEachern 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 Cooper as Georgia'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, Cooper joins an elite alumni association of past state boys basketball award winners, including Karl-Anthony Towns (2012-13 & 2013-14, St. Joseph High School, N.J.), Dwight Howard (2003-04, Southwest Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.), Chris Bosh (2001-02, Lincoln High School, Texas), Paul Pierce (1994-95, Inglewood High School, Calif.), Chauncey Billups (1993-94 & 1994-95, George Washington High School, Colo.) and Jason Kidd (1991-92, St. Joseph Notre Dame High School, Calif.).

The 6-foot-1, 165-pound junior guard led the Indians to a 32-0 record and the Class AAAAAAA state championship this past season. Cooper averaged 27.2 points, 8.1 assists, 5.6 rebounds and 4.3 steals per game, and he tallied 20 points and four assists in the title-game win over Meadowcreek High. A three-time All-State selection, he will participate in USA Basketball's Junior National Team Mini Camp in Minneapolis next month.

Cooper has volunteered locally as a youth mentor and as a youth basketball coach. "Sharife is a great high school player—he is the key to McEachern's success," said Jesse Bonner, head coach of Kennesaw Mountain High School. "He can get anywhere on the court that he wants and can space you out with his 3-point shooting. More importantly, he makes all the players around him better."

Cooper has maintained a 3.03 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. He will begin his senior 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.

Cooper joins Gatorade Georgia Boys Basketball Players of the Year Ashton Hagans (2017-18, Newton High School), Wendell Carter (2016-17, Pace Academy), Alterique Gilbert (2015-16, Miller Grove High School), and Jaylen Brown (2014-15, Wheeler High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Cooper also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit www.Gatorade.com/POY, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

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