WALKER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® LOUISIANA 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 **Jalen Cook of Walker High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Cook is the first Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Walker 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 Cook as Louisiana'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, Cook 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, 185-pound junior guard averaged 29.5 points, 5.1 rebounds, 4.7 assists and 2.8 steals per game this past season, leading the Wildcats (28-10) to the Class 5A state championship game. A three-time First Team All-District selection, Cook was this year's Louisiana High School Basketball Coaches Association's state MVP. He concluded his junior year with 2,293 points in his prep basketball career.

Cook has volunteered locally for the US Marine Corps Toys for Tots Foundation, and he has donated his time to multiple community service initiatives through his church. "Jalen Cook is virtually unstoppable," said Mark Cascio, head coach of Baton Rouge Catholic High. "He hits tough, contested shots in crunch time. I think he shoots, drive and handles the ball at a level that's unmatched right now (in this state)."

Cook has maintained a 3.35 GPA in the classroom. 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.

Cook joins Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Players of the Year Ja'Vonte Smart (2017-18, 2016-17 & 2015-16, Scotlandville Magnet High School), and Wayde Sims (2014-15, University Laboratory School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Cook 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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