

## MORGAN ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE ALABAMA BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

**CHICAGO** (May 23, 2019) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Gunnar Henderson of Morgan Academy** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Alabama Baseball Player of the Year**. Henderson is the first Gatorade Alabama Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Morgan Academy.

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 Henderson as Alabama's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award to be announced in May, Henderson joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo High School, Mich.), Jon Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Preparatory School, Wash.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman High School, Tenn.), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas), Rick Porcello (2006-2007, Seaton Hall Preparatory School, N.J.) and Kris Bryant (2009-10, Bonanza High School, Nev.).

The 6-foot-3, 200-pound senior shortstop batted .559 with 11 home runs and 75 RBI in this past season, leading the Senators (30-2) to the Alabama Independent Schools Association Class AAA state championship series. The left-handed-hitting Henderson, an Under Armour All-American selection, also banged out 17 doubles and nine triples while scoring 69 runs and stealing 28 bases. Ranked as the No. 23 recruit in the Class of 2019 by Baseball America, he posted a .634 on-base percentage and a 1.225 slugging percentage.

A long-standing member of the Morgan Academy Student Government, Henderson has volunteered locally at a food bank and homeless shelter and as a youth baseball coach. "Gunnar has tremendous bat speed and discipline at the plate," said Marshall Watts, head coach of Fort Dale Academy. "He hit the hardest opposite-field ball I've ever seen earlier this year against us, and I played in the SEC for a few years."

Henderson has maintained an unweighted 4.05 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play baseball on scholarship at Auburn University this fall, but is projected as an early round selection in June's Major League Baseball draft.

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. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Henderson joins recent Gatorade Alabama Baseball Players of the Year Garrett Wade (2017-18, Hartselle High School), Tanner Burns (2016-17, Decatur High School), Braxton Garrett (2015-16, Florence High School), Hunter Stovall (2014-15, Pelham High School), and Cody Reed (2013-14, Ardmore High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Henderson 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](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](https://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

###