

## INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE TENNESSEE 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 **Robert Hassell of Independence High School** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Tennessee Baseball Player of the Year**. Hassell is the first Gatorade Tennessee Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Independence 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 Hassell as Tennessee'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, Hassell 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-2, 195-pound junior, left-handed pitcher and outfielder had led the Eagles to a 24-11 record and a berth in the Division 1, Class AAA state tournament at the time of his selection. Hassell owned a 5-2 record with a 1.07 earned run average and 113 strikeouts in 59 innings pitched through 35 games. He had allowed just 25 hits and walked 21. At the plate, a two-time District 11-AAA Player of the Year carried a .410 batting average with 12 home runs, 31 runs scored and 33 RBI into the postseason. With 43 walks, he had a .583 on-base percentage and a .890 slugging percentage.

Hassell has volunteered locally as a youth baseball coach. "Offensively, you have to pitch around Hassell," said Kenny Roeten, head coach of Page High. "He hits the ball hard every time he sees a strike. Pitch him (off the plate), and he goes the other way. Pitch high and in or middle-middle, you will find the ball 400 feet away. He is a legit talent."

Hassell has maintained a 3.52 GPA in the classroom. He has made a verbal commitment to play baseball on scholarship at Vanderbilt University beginning in the fall of 2020.

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.

Hassell joins recent Gatorade Tennessee Baseball Players of the Year Ryan Weathers (2017-18, Loretto High School), Spencer Strider (2016-17, Christian Academy of Knoxville), Zach Linginfelter (2015-16, Sevier County High School), Donny Everett (2014-15, Clarksville High School), and Justus Sheffield (2013-14, Tullahoma High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Hassell 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).

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