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**MONTVERDE ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® FLORIDA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 20, 2015) — In its 30th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Ben Simmons of Montverde Academy as its 2014-15 Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Simmons is the first Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Montverde 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 court, distinguishes Simmons as Florida'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, Simmons joins an elite alumni association of past state boys basketball award winners, including Dwight Howard (2003-04, SW Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.), Chauncey Billups (1993-94 & 1994-95, George Washington HS, Colo.), Jason Kidd (1991-92, St. Joseph Notre Dame HS, Calif.), Paul Pierce (1994-95, Inglewood HS, Calif.) and Chris Bosh (2001-02, Lincoln HS, Texas).

The 6-foot-10, 220-pound senior forward has led the Eagles to a 28-1 record and a berth in the Dick's Sporting Goods National High School Tournament, scheduled for April 2. Also the 2015 Morgan Wootten Award winner and the Naismith Trophy Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Simmons averaged 28 points and 11.9 rebounds while shooting 70.7 percent from inside the arc through 29 games. He is rated as the nation's No. 1 recruit in the Class of 2015 by ESPN and is a 2015 McDonald's All-American Game selection as well as a 2015 Jordan Brand Classic game invitee. Simmons has also posted regular-season averages of four assists and 2.6 steals per game and has registered 24 double-doubles on the season.

Simmons has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has volunteered on behalf of Basketball Buddies literacy-outreach and as part of a study skills initiative for Montverde elementary students. He has also donated his time as a life skills and study skills guest speaker and mentor in his native Australia.

"Ben Simmons is an electrifying player," said Montverde Academy head coach Kevin Boyle. "He's a great rebounder and he has the ability to help teammates get better. I think he's the best high school player in the country and the scary thing is I think he can get a lot better. He's improved each year because he recognizes he can keep getting better."

Simmons has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at Louisiana State University 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 high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), 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.

Simmons joins recent Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Players of the Year Joel Berry (2013-14, 2012-13 & 2011-12, Lake Highland Preparatory School), Austin Rivers (2010-11, Winter Park High School), Brandon Knight (2009-10 & 2008-09, Pine Crest School), Ray Shipman (2007-08, Monsignor Pace High School), and Nick Calathes (2006-07, Lake Howell High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. 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 www.gatorade.com/poy.

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