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**TRINITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® NORTH CAROLINA 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 Dennis Smith Jr. of Trinity Christian School as its 2014-15 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Smith Jr. is the first Gatorade North Carolina Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Trinity Christian 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 court, distinguishes Smith Jr. as North Carolina'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, Smith Jr. 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-3, 180-pound junior guard averaged 21.8 points per game this past season, leading the Crusaders (23-10) to the North Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association's Class 1A state semifinals. Competing for Team United in Nike's Elite Youth Basketball League this past summer, Smith averaged 12.0 points, 5.5 assists, 3.5 rebounds and 1.5 steals per contest. Also a participant in the NBPA Top 100 and adidas Unrivaled camps in 2014, he was a member of the 2013-14 USA Basketball Men's Developmental National Team.

Smith has maintained a 3.90 weighted GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade Award's broad criteria. He has donated his time locally as part of multiple community service initiatives in coordination with his church.

"He could be one of the best high school basketball players I have seen in a long time," said Dan Pruessner, head coach of rival Freedom Christian Academy. "He sees the floor really well. He's crazy explosive. He scores at will. He has quick hands. He also dropped 22 points in a quarter on us, and 17 of those were on jump shots. So, he really has no weakness."

Smith 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 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.

Smith Jr. joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Boys Basketball Players of the Year Keyshawn Woods (2013-14, NorthHigh Schoolide Christian Academy), Isaiah Hicks (2012-13, J.F. Webb High School), Rodney Purvis (2011-12, Upper Room Christian Academy), Marshall Plumlee (2010-11, Christ School), Reggie Bullock (2009-10, Kinston High School), Ryan Kelly (2008-09, Ravenscroft School), and Ty Walker (2007-08 & 2006-07, New Hanover 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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