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**WEST VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® ALASKA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 10, 2016) — In its 31st year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Ruthy Hebard of West Valley High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Alaska Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Hebard is the third Gatorade Alaska Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from West Valley 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 court, distinguishes Hebard as Alaska's best high school girls basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Basketball Player of the Year award announced in March, Hebard joins an elite alumni association of past state girls basketball award-winners, including Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Diana Taurasi (1998-99 & 1999-00, Don Antonio Lugo HS, Calif.), Maya Moore (2005-06 Collins Hill HS, Ga.), Rashanda McCants (2004-05, Asheville HS, N.C.), Shyra Ely (1999-00, Ben Davis HS, Ind.) and Lisa Leslie (1988-89, Morningside HS, Calif.).

The 6-foot-4 senior forward has led the Wolfpack to a 20-6 record and a berth in the Mid-Alaska championship game, scheduled for March 12. The state's two-time returning Gatorade Girls Basketball Player of the Year, Hebard is averaging 25.9 points, 14.8 rebounds, 3.3 steals and 2.1 blocks per game. A two-time First Team All-State selection, she was the Class 4A Player of the year and USA TODAY's ALL-USA Alaska Player of the Year as a junior.

Hebard has maintained a 3.43 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally assisting the elderly and coaching youth basketball.

"Hebard is long and athletic with a good basketball sense," said Kelly Smith, head coach at Ketchikan High. "You've got to respect her outside shooting ability, and she's unstoppable with a full head of steam going to the basket."

Hebard has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Oregon 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.

Three-time winner Hebard joins Gatorade Alaska Girls Basketball Players of the Year Alysha Devine (2012-13, Wasilla High School), Hannah Mattson (2011-12, West Valley High School), Keiahnna Engel (2010-11 & 2009-10, Dimond High School), Jenna Johnson (2008-09, Wasilla High School), Sylvia Bullock (2007-08, South Anchorage High School), and Talisa Rhea (2006-07, Juneau-Douglas 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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