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**SOUTH MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® ARIZONA 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 Najiyah Pack of South Mountain High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Arizona Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Pack is the first Gatorade Arizona Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from South Mountain 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 Pack as Arizona'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, Pack 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 5-foot-10 senior guard led the Jaguars to a 25-8 record and the Division 3 state championship this past season. Pack averaged 26.5 points, 9.5 rebounds, 5.8 steals and 3.2 assists per game. A First Team All-Arizona honoree as a junior, she was also named First Team All-Conference each of the last two seasons.

Pack has maintained a 3.36 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of youth sports programs and a dog park.

"Pack is a really smooth operator and she's super hard to defend," said Nikki Simpson, head coach at Ironwood Ridge High. "She can really, really shoot the ball, but she's also crafty getting to the rim."

Pack has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at New Mexico 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.

Pack joins recent Gatorade Arizona Girls Basketball Players of the Year Kristine Anigwe (2014-15, Desert Vista High School), Julia Barcello (2013-14, Seton Catholic Preparatory High School), Courtney Ekmark (2012-13, Saint Mary's Catholic High School), Shilpa Tummala (2011-12, St. Mary's Catholic High School), Promise Amukamara (2010-11, Apollo High School), Rebecca Woodberry (2009-10, Tolleson High School), Davellyn Whyte (2008-09, St. Mary's Catholic High School), Amy Patton (2007-08, McClintock High School), and Kayla Pedersen (2006-07, Red Mountain 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/pov.

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