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**POCAHONTAS AREA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® IOWA 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 Elle Ruffridge of Pocahontas Area High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Iowa Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Ruffridge is the first Gatorade Iowa Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Pocahontas Area 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 Ruffridge as Iowa'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, Ruffridge 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-3 junior point guard led the Indians to a 26-0 record the Class 3A state title this past season. Ruffridge averaged 28.5 points, 8.7 assists and 5.2 steals per game while shooting 62 percent from inside the arc. The 2014-15 Iowa Basketball Coaches Association Class 3A Player of the Year, she has scored 2,111 points in her prep career and will enter her senior year well within striking distance of the state record of 2,756.

Ruffridge has maintained a 3.74 GPA in the classroom. A member of her school's student council and honor choir ensemble, she has volunteered locally as a peer mentor and as a youth baseball team manager.

"Elle Ruffridge is a tremendous competitor, leader and person," said Michael Ford, head coach at Algona High. "She is the engine that makes their team go and it's a great team to watch. She has a great feel for the game, can affect the game without scoring and is relentless in attacking with the ball in transition. Her stats speak for themselves, but what she brings to the table is more than that. She is a great kid off the court, too."

Ruffridge has verbally committed to play basketball on scholarship at Missouri State University beginning in the fall of 2017.

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.

Ruffridge joins recent Gatorade Iowa Girls Basketball Players of the Year Audrey Faber (2014-15, Dowling Catholic High School), Haley Lorenzen (2013-14, City High School), Ally Disterhoft (2012-13, Iowa City West High School), Maddie Manning (2011-12, Ankeny High School), Kiah Stokes (2010-11 & 2009-10, Linn-Mar High School), Jaime Printy (2008-09, Linn-Mar High School), Kelly Krei (2007-08, City High School), and Kelsey Bolte (2006-07, Battle Creek-Ida Grove 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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