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**ABERDEEN CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Brianna Kusler of Aberdeen Central High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Kusler is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Aberdeen Central 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 Kusler as South Dakota'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, Kusler 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-9 senior guard has led the Golden Eagles to a 21-1 record and a berth in the Class AA state tournament, scheduled to begin March 10. Kusler averaged 16.6 points and 8.6 rebounds while shooting 50 percent from inside the arc through 22 games. A 2015 First Team All-State selection, she surpassed the 1,000-point mark for her prep career earlier this season.

Kusler has maintained a 4.08 weighted GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of her church youth group, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, Kids Against Hunger and a childcare facility.

"Brianna Kusler is the type of player that every coach would love to have on their team," said Wade Stobbs, head coach at Huron High. "She has the skill, height and athleticism to play every position on the court."

Kusler has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at Northern 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.

Kusler joins recent Gatorade South Dakota Girls Basketball Players of the Year Sydney Palmer (2014-15, T.F. Riggs High School), Macy Miller (2013-14, Mitchell High School), Kerri Young (2012-13, Mitchell High School), Heidi Hoff (2011-12, Brandon Valley High School), Alex Kneeland (2010-11, Summit High School), Shaunteva Ashley (2009-10, Roosevelt), Sam Ostarello (2008-09, Stanley County High School), Alexis Yackley (2007-08, Sully Buttes), and Jill Young (2006-07, Mitchell Christian 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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