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**BARROW HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® ALASKA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 17, 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 Kamaka Hepa of Barrow High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Alaska Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Hepa is the first Gatorade Alaska Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Barrow 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 Hepa as Alaska'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, Hepa 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-9, 210-pound sophomore forward had led the Whalers to a 22-4 record and a berth in the Class 3A state quarterfinals at the time of his selection. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Hepa is averaging 19.2 points, 11.8 rebounds, 3.2 blocks and 2.8 assists per game. He was a First Team All-State honoree and was selected to the USA TODAY American Family Insurance ALL-USA Alaska First Team as a freshman.

Hepa has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of his church youth group, he has volunteered locally on behalf of youth basketball programs.

"Hepa impacts the game in so many ways, and he's a great team guy," said Frank Ostanik, head coach at Monroe Catholic High. "You have to guard him out to the 3-point line, and if you double him, he has extraordinary vision and easily finds his teammates. I rarely ever see him take a bad shot."

Hepa will begin his junior 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.

Two-time winner Hepa joins recent Gatorade Alaska Boys Basketball Players of the Year Scooter Bynum (2013-14, Monroe Catholic High School), Adam Klie (2012-13, Service High School), Connor Devine (2011-12, Wasilla High School), Devon Bookert (2010-11, West Anchorage High School), Kyle Fossman (2009-10, Haines High School), Ryan Hanley (2008-09, Dimond High School), Kevin Winford (2007-08, Bartlett High School), and Jesse Bean (2006-07, Wasilla 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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