

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**RIO RANCHO HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® NEW MEXICO 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 Clay Patterson of Rio Rancho High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade New Mexico Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Patterson is the first Gatorade New Mexico Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Rio Rancho 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 Patterson as New Mexico'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, Patterson 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, 160-pound junior guard led the Rams to a 19-12 record and the Class 6A state title this past season. Patterson averaged 20.5 points, 3.3 assists and 2.3 rebounds per game while shooting 55 percent from 3-point range. A First Team All-State selection, he scored a game-high 17 points in Rio Rancho's 56-54 win over Carlsbad in the Class 6A state championship game.

Patterson has maintained a 3.59 GPA in the classroom. A devoted parishioner in his church community, he has volunteered locally as a youth basketball coach, on behalf of an area retirement home and in association with an elementary school literacy-outreach initiative.

"Clay Patterson has evolved into a fantastic basketball player in just one year," said Rio Rancho High head coach Wally Salata. "He practices as hard as he plays and he is very consistent on a nightly basis. His future is very bright."

Patterson will begin his senior 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.

Patterson joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Boys Basketball Players of the Year Ryan Jones (2014-15, Sue Cleveland High School), Adonis Saltes (2013-14, Valley High School), Bryce Alford (2012-13, La Cueva High School), Cullen Neal (2011-12, Eldorado High School), Chris Strong (2010-11, Eldorado High School), Alex Kirk (2009-10, Los Alamos High School), Lucio Luttrell (2008-09, Las Cruces High School), Jeff Taylor (2007-08, Hobbs High School), and Aaron 'Gordo' Castillo (2006-07, Las Cruces 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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