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**RICE MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® VERMONT 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 Ben Shungu of Rice Memorial High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade Vermont Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Shungu is the fourth Gatorade Vermont Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Rice Memorial 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 Shungu as Vermont'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, Shungu 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-1, 200-pound senior guard led the Green Knights to a 20-4 record and the Division 1 state championship game this past season. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Shungu averaged 21.9 points, 5.9 rebounds, 4.1 assists and 3.2 steals per game. The USA TODAY American Family Insurance ALL-USA Vermont Player of the Year, he was also the Metro League Player of the Year and was selected Mr. Basketball by the Burlington Free Press.

Shungu has maintained a B average in the classroom. A peer mentor in his school, he has volunteered locally on behalf of youth basketball programs.

"Shungu just does everything well," said Sol Bayer-Pacht, head coach at South Burlington High. "He's very active on both ends of the floor and he's so good at taking what the defense gives him. No one in the state can check him man-to-man, but if you double-team him, he'll get someone else a layup."

Shungu will attend the University of Vermont this fall, where he will play basketball.

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 Shungu joins Gatorade Vermont Boys Basketball Players of the Year Pavin Parrish (2013-14, Rochester High School), Matt St. Amour (2012-13 & 2011-12, Missisquoi Valley Union High School), Ben Ferris (2010-11, Essex High School), Joe O'Shea (2009-10, Burlington High School), Clancy Rugg (2008-09, Burlington High School), Matt Joslin (2007-08, North Country Union High School), and Pat Bergmann (2006-07, Rice Memorial 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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