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**HOMESTEAD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® INDIANA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 13, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Karissa McLaughlin of Homestead High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Indiana Girls Basketball Player of the Year. McLaughlin is the first Gatorade Indiana Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Homestead 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 McLaughlin as Indiana'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, McLaughlin joins an elite alumni association of past state girls basketball award-winners, including Maya Moore (2005-06, Collins Hill HS, Ga.), Rashanda McCants (2004-05, Asheville HS, N.C.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Diana Taurasi (1998-99 & 1999-00, Don Antonio Lugo HS, Calif.), Shyra Ely (1999-00, Ben Davis HS, Ind.) and Lisa Leslie (1988-89, Morningside HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-8 senior guard led the Spartans to a 28-2 record and the Class 4A state championship this past season. McLaughlin averaged 25.9 points, 5.6 assists, 3.6 rebounds and 2.7 steals per game, and she knocked down 3-pointers at a 46.1 percent clip (111-of-241). McLaughlin poured in 29 points and passed for six assists in Homestead's 61-54 win over Pike High in the state final. A three-time member of the Indiana Basketball Coaches Association's Underclassmen Supreme team, she concluded her prep basketball career with 2,586 points.

A motivational speaker and mentor to countless area youth sports teams, McLaughlin has volunteered locally as part of multiple community-service initiatives through her church youth group and with fundraising campaigns to benefit breast cancer research. "Karissa is the best high school girls basketball player I've seen or coached against in my 20 years as a head coach," said Eric Thornton, head coach of Norwell High. "She is the best pure shooter and can finish at the rim with great vision and balance."

McLaughlin has maintained a weighted 4.33 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Florida beginning 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 Player of the Year Selection Committee, 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.

McLaughlin joins recent Gatorade Indiana Girls Basketball Players of the Year Jackie Young (2015-16, Princeton Community High School), Ali Patberg (2014-15, Columbus North High School), Whitney Jennings (2013-14, Logansport High School), Stephanie Mavunga (2012-13 & 2011-12, Brownsburg High School), Bria Goss (2010-11, Ben Davis High School), Courtney Moses (2009-10, Oak Hill High School), Skylar Diggins (2008-09 & 2007-08, Washington High School), and Ta'Shia Phillips (2006-07, Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Karissa will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

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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