

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**POCAHONTAS AREA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® IOWA 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 Elle Ruffridge of Pocahontas Area High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Iowa Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Ruffridge is the first Gatorade Iowa Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Pocahontas Area 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 Ruffridge as Iowa'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, Ruffridge 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-3 senior point guard led the Indians to a 27-1 record and their second straight Class 3A state title this past season. Ruffridge averaged 30 points, 6.1 rebounds and 4.8 assists per game while shooting 58.2 percent from the floor. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Basketball Player of the Year, she established new state records with 2,951 career points, 802 assists and 466 three-point shots made.

A member of the National Honor Society, student council and her school's concert choir, Ruffridge has volunteered locally on behalf of an elementary school mentoring program and as a youth basketball coach. "You will not find a harder worker, a better teammate or a more passionate player than Elle Ruffridge," said Pocahontas Area head coach Robert Maske. "She never lost focus of her goals and made many sacrifices to put in the time practicing. She never wavered in her desire to be the best."

Ruffridge has maintained a 3.82 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at Missouri 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 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.

Two-time winner Ruffridge joins Gatorade Iowa Girls Basketball Players of the Year Audrey Faber (2014-15, Dowling Catholic High School), Haley Lorenzen (2013-14, City High School), Ally Disterhoft (2012-13, Iowa City West High School), Maddie Manning (2011-12, Ankeny High School), Kiah Stokes (2010-11 & 2009-10, Linn-Mar High School), Jaime Printy (2008-09, Linn-Mar High School), Kelly Krei (2007-08, City High School), and Kelsey Bolte (2006-07, Battle Creek-Ida Grove High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Elle 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.

###