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**ST. FRANCES ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® MARYLAND 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 Nia Clouden of St. Frances Academy as its 2016-17 Gatorade Maryland Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Clouden is the second Gatorade Maryland Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from St. Frances Academy.

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 Clouden as Maryland'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, Clouden 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-7 junior point guard led the Panthers to a 30-0 record and the Interscholastic Athletic Association of Maryland A Conference state championship this past season. Clouden averaged 13.7 points, 2.8 assists, 2.5 rebounds and 1.5 steals per game. An IAAM A Conference All-Star, she was a 2015-16 Baltimore Sun All-Metro First Team selection and is rated as the No. 60 recruit in the Class of 2018 by Blue Star Basketball Report.

Clouden administers insulin and takes a blood sugar count daily for her grandmother, who has diabetes. She has volunteered locally as a peer mentor and as a youth basketball coach. "Nia is awesome," said Bookie Rosemond, head coach of Archbishop Spalding High. "She controls everything. The tempo of the game is always up to her. She just dictates both ends of the court. She's very unselfish, unflappable and smart."

Clouden has maintained a 3.31 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her 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 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.

Clouden joins recent Gatorade Maryland Girls Basketball Players of the Year Mykea Gray (2015-16, National Christian Academy), Taylor Murray (2014-15, Annapolis Area Christian School), De'Janae Boykin (2013-14, C.H. Flowers High School), Amanda Fioravanti (2012-13, Our Lady of Good Counsel High School), Jonquel Jones (2011-12, Riverdale Baptist School), Taylor Brown (2010-11, Bishop McNamara High School), Kelsey Wolfe (2009-10, Seneca Valley High School), Tianna Hawkins (2008-09, Riverdale Baptist School), Tarik Hislop (2007-08, Paint Branch High School), and Marah Strickland (2006-07, Towson Catholic High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Nia 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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