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**MALTA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® MONTANA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 13, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Sophia Stiles of Malta High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Stiles is the second Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Malta 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 Stiles as Montana'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, Stiles 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 5-foot-9 senior guard had led the M-ettes to a 22-1 record and a berth in the Class B state tournament quarterfinals at the time of her selection. Stiles averaged 21.8 points, 6.6 rebounds, 5.7 assists, 4.3 steals and 1.1 steals through 23 games. A three-time First Team Class B All-State selection, Stiles was the MVP of the 2015 state tournament. She entered the state quarterfinals with 1,741 points in her prep basketball career.

A six-time Class B state champion with the Malta track and field team, Stiles has served on the Malta High student council as the secretary and vice president. She has volunteered locally with the Malta Food Bank and as a youth basketball camp counselor. "Sophia has the ability to make big plays over and over," said Nate Hammond, head coach of Malta High. "She excels in big games, and her competitiveness and drive is the best I have ever coached and probably ever well."

Stiles has maintained a weighted 3.86 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a national letter of intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Montana 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.

Two-time winner Stiles joins Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Players of the Year Taylor Goligoski (2014-15 & 2012-13, Hamilton High School), Jill Barta (2013-14, Fairfield High School), Peyton Ferris (2011-12, Twin Bridges High School), Danielle Muri (2010-11, Billings West High School), Lexie Nelson (2009-10 & 2007-08, Butte High School), Joslyn Tinkle (2008-09 & 2007-08, Big Sky High School), and Kirsten Tilleman (2006-07, Bozeman High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Sophia 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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