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**CENTENNIAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® NEVADA 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 Samantha Thomas of Centennial High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Nevada Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Thomas is the fourth Gatorade Nevada Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Centennial 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 Thomas as Nevada'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, Thomas 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 6-foot senior guard and forward led the Bulldogs to a 30-2 record and their third straight Division I state title this past season. Thomas averaged 16.1 points, 6.2 rebounds and 3.1 assists per game while shooting 56 percent from inside the arc. A First Team All-State selection and USA TODAY's 2015-16 ALL-USA Nevada Girls Basketball Player of the Year, she scored 19 points to go with six rebounds and five assists in Centennial's 97-52 win over Bishop Manogue in the state title clincher.

Thomas has volunteered locally on behalf of Students Against Destructive Decisions and as a youth basketball coach. "Samantha Thomas is a great athlete who can do a little bit of everything on the court," said Phil Clarke, head coach at Palo Verde High. "It is very difficult to try to match up with her. She plays hard and is aggressive, both offensively and defensively. She'll kick your butt, but she's always been respectful and does things the right way."

Thomas has maintained a 4.05 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Arizona 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.

Thomas joins recent Gatorade Nevada Girls Basketball Players of the Year Katie Turner (2015-16, Bishop Manogue Catholic High School), Mallory McGwire (2014-15 & 2013-14, Reno High School), Sarita Jo Condie (2012-13, Pershing County High School), Jada Brown (2011-12, Centennial High School), Amanda Delgado (2010-11, Liberty High School), Alexis Byrd (2009-10, Centennial High School), Mia Bell (2008-09, Durango High School), Ashley Gayle (2007-08, Bishop Gorman High School), and Italee Lucas (2006-07, Centennial High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Samantha 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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