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**EL DORADO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® ARKANSAS BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 20, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Daniel Gafford of El Dorado High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Gafford is the first Gatorade Arkansas Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from El Dorado 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 Gafford as Arkansas's best high school boys basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced in March, Gafford joins an elite alumni association of past state boys basketball award winners, including Karl-Anthony Towns (2012-13 & 2013-14, St. Joseph HS, N.J.), Dwight Howard (2003-04, SW Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.), Chris Bosh (2001-02, Lincoln HS, Texas), Paul Pierce (1994-95, Inglewood HS, Calif.), Chauncey Billups (1993-94 & 1994-95, George Washington HS, Colo.) and Jason Kidd (1991-92, St. Joseph Notre Dame HS, Calif.).

The 6-foot-11, 230-pound senior center led the Wildcats to a 28-5 record and the Class 6A state final this past season. Gafford averaged 17.4 points, 16.0 rebounds, 7.8 blocks and 2.5 steals per game, while recording 11 triple-doubles. A three-time All-State honoree, he was also selected to the USA TODAY's ALL-USA Arkansas First Team.

A devoted member of his church youth group, Gafford has volunteered locally on behalf of drug and alcohol abuse awareness programs. "Gafford has great length and the uncanny ability to block shots without fouling people," said Scotty Pennington, head coach at Lake Hamilton High. "I think he's the most talented kid in Arkansas, and when he puts everything together, he's unstoppable."

Gafford has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Arkansas 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.

Gafford joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Basketball Players of the Year Malik Monk (2015-16, Bentonville High School), Kevaughn Allen (2014-15 & 2013-14, North Little Rock High School), Bobby Portis (2012-13, Hall High School), Archie Goodwin (2011-12 & 2010-11, Sylvan Hills High School), Preston Purifoy (2009-10, Conway High School), Fred Gulley (2008-09 & 2007-08, Fayetteville High School), and James Anderson (2006-07, Junction City High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Daniel 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.