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**KAHUKU HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® HAWAII 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 Jessiya Villa of Kahuku High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Hawaii Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Villa is the second Gatorade Hawaii Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Kahuku 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 Villa as Hawaii'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, Villa 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, 180-pound senior guard led the Red Raiders to a 26-3 record and the Division 1 state championship this past season. Villa averaged 17.1 points, 6.2 assists, 4.8 rebounds and 1.5 steals per game. The Honolulu Star-Advertiser Player of the Year and the Oahu Interscholastic Association East Player of the Year, he was also a First Team All-State selection in West Virginia as a junior.

A devoted member of his church community, Villa has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, food donation drives, community clean-up initiatives and youth basketball programs. "Villa could score from anywhere on offense, he was a tenacious and relentless defender, and he was the floor general in getting his teammates involved," said Neil Bowers, head coach at Castle High. "Kahuku was a different team when he didn't play."

Villa has maintained a 3.75 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Villa joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Boys Basketball Players of the Year Hugh Hogland (2015-16, 'Iolani School), Kupa'a Harrison (2014-15, Kalaheo High School), Ikaika Phillip (2013-14, Iolani School), Joshua Ko (2012-13, Kalaheo High School), DeForest Buckner (2011-12, Punahou School), Micah Christenson (2010-11 & 2009-10, Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama High School), Pi'i Minns (2008-09, Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama High School), Kameron Steinhoff (2007-08, Punahou School), and Spencer McLachlin (2006-07, Punahou School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Jessiya 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.