

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**SCOTLANDVILLE MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® LOUISIANA 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 Ja'Vonte Smart of Scotlandville Magnet High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Smart is the first Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Scotlandville Magnet 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 Smart as Louisiana'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, Smart 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-4, 195-pound junior point guard led the Hornets to a 31-4 record and the Division I state championship this past season. Smart averaged 25.1 points, 8.7 rebounds, 6.4 assists, 2.1 steals and 1.1 blocks per game and was named MVP of the state final for a second straight year. He concluded his junior year with 2,219 points in his prep basketball career.

Smart has volunteered locally as a youth basketball coach and counselor. "Ja'Vonte is very, very, very good," said Taurus Howard, head coach of Edna Karr High. "He is a pro player in the making. He makes his teammates better and he has great knowledge for the game."

Smart has maintained a weighted 3.32 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. He will begin his 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.

Two-time winner Smart joins Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Players of the Year Wayde Sims (2014-15, University Laboratory School), Trey Touchet (2013-14 & 2012-13, St. Thomas More High School), Ricardo Gathers (2011-12 & 2010-11, Riverside Academy), Matt Derenbecker (2009-10 & 2008-09, Metairie Park Country Day School), and Greg Monroe (2007-08 & 2006-07, Helen Cox High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Ja'Vonte 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.

###