

**Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)**

**GRAY COLLEGIATE ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® SOUTH CAROLINA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 20, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Jalek Felton of Gray Collegiate Academy as its 2016-17 Gatorade South Carolina Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Felton is the first Gatorade South Carolina Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Gray Collegiate Academy.

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 Felton as South Carolina'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, Felton 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-4, 180-pound senior guard averaged 26.8 points, 5.4 assists and 4.8 rebounds per game while shooting 83 percent from the line this past season, leading the War Eagles (15-7) to the Class 2A semifinals. A 2017 Jordan Brand Classic game invitee, Felton was named the Class 2A Player of the Year by the South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association. He is ranked as the nation's No. 24 recruit in the Class of 2017 by ESPN.

Felton has volunteered locally as a motivational speaker for underprivileged youth and as a youth basketball coach. "Jalek Felton is an outstanding athlete and basketball player," said Andrew Peckham, head coach at Fox Creek High. "He does not have many weaknesses to his game. Against us, his ability to score on the perimeter and inside the paint along with his defense was tremendous. We really did not have any answers for him."

Felton has maintained a B average in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade award's broad criteria. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of North Carolina 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.

Felton joins recent Gatorade South Carolina Boys Basketball Players of the Year Joseph Battle (2015-16, Abbeville High School), P.J. Dozier (2014-15, Spring Valley High School), Seventh Woods (2013-14, Hammond School), Justin McKie (2012-13, Irmo High School), Brice Johnson (2011-12 & 2010-11, Edisto High School), RJ Slawson (2009-10, Fort Dorchester High School), Milton Jennings (2008-09 & 2007-08, Pinewood Preparatory School), and Trevor Deloach (2006-07, Saluda High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Jalek 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).