

**Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3622)**

**STAPLES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE CONNECTICUT BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 30, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Ben Casparius of Staples High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Connecticut Baseball Player of the Year. Casparius is the first Gatorade Connecticut Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Staples 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 field, distinguishes Casparius as Connecticut's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year, Casparius joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo High School, Mich.), Jon Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Preparatory School, Wash.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman High School, Tenn.), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas), Rick Porcello (2006-2007, Seaton Hall Preparatory School, N.J.) and Kris Bryant (2009-10, Bonanza High School, Nev.).

The 6-foot-2, 205-pound senior right-handed pitcher and shortstop had led the Wreckers to a 13-8 record at the time of his selection. Casparius owned a .449 batting average with seven home runs and 26 RBI through 21 games, along with posting a 3-2 record, a 2.52 ERA and 57 strikeouts in 33.1 innings on the mound. A two-time All-State honoree, he is also a Rawlings/Perfect Game Third Team All-American and was named to USA TODAY's American Family Insurance ALL-USA Connecticut First Team.

A devoted member of his church community, Casparius has volunteered locally on behalf of a homeless shelter and youth sports programs. "I haven't seen anyone in the past few years who can do the things Casparius can do on the field," said Richard Lacomis, head coach at Stamford High. "He's a shut-down pitcher, pumping mid to upper 80s consistently, and he's got a plus-level curveball. He's also probably the toughest out in the league—everything he hits is a missile."

Casparius has maintained a 3.22 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball 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.

Casparius joins recent Gatorade Connecticut Baseball Players of the Year Jimmy Titus (2015-16 & 2014-15, East Catholic High School), Ronnie Rossomando (2013-14, Bunnell High School), Thomas Milone (2012-13, Masuk High School), Bryan Daniello (2011-12, Brien McMahon High School), Sal Romano (2010-11, Southington High School), Colin O'Keefe (2009-10, Waterford High School), Matt Carasiti (2008-09, Berlin), Jason Esposito (2007-08, Amity High School), and Matt Harvey (2006-07, Fitch High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Ben 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 the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. 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).

###