

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3622)

HOLCOMB HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE KANSAS BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

CHICAGO (May 30, 2017) — In its 32nd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Conner VanCleave of Holcomb High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Kansas Baseball Player of the Year. VanCleave is the first Gatorade Kansas Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Holcomb 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 VanCleave as Kansas's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year, VanCleave 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-7, 220-pound senior left-handed pitcher and first baseman had led the Longhorns to a 16-2 record and a berth in the Class 4A-II state final at the time of his selection. VanCleave posted a 6-1 record and a 0.44 ERA through 18 games, recording 64 strikeouts in 31.2 innings. A two-time Kansas Association of Baseball Coaches Class 4A-II Player of the Year, he was batting .833 with five home runs and 47 RBI entering the state title game, boasting a 1.733 slugging percentage.

A member of the National Honor Society and Students Against Destructive Decisions, VanCleave has served as a student leader for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and as a youth baseball coach. "Conner VanCleave is the best all-around player I have seen in years, said Rick Williams, head coach at Colby High. "He has a power arm on the mound with great stuff and an intense competitiveness. At the plate, he is a great gap hitter with a lot of power. He does a great job covering the plate and will hurt you even when you make great pitches."

VanCleave has maintained a 3.64 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at Kansas University 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.

VanCleave joins recent Gatorade Kansas Baseball Players of the Year Riley Pint (2015-16 & 2014-15, Saint Thomas Aquinas High School), Braden Minor (2013-14, Eisenhower High School), Ryan Colombo (2012-13, Seaman High School), Collin Wiles (2011-12, Blue Valley West High School), Conner Knight (2010-11, Maize High School), Cody Kukuk (2009-10, Free State High School), Garrett Gould (2008-09, Maize High School), Lee Ridenhour (2007-08, Shawnee Mission West High School), and Derek Norris (2006-07, Goddard High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Conner 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.

###