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**CATHOLIC MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE WISCONSIN 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 Ben Dragani of Catholic Memorial High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Wisconsin Baseball Player of the Year. Dragani is the first Gatorade Wisconsin Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Catholic Memorial 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 Dragani as Wisconsin's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year, Dragani 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-5, 220-pound senior left-handed pitcher and first baseman had led the Crusaders to a 16-2 record and a berth in the Division 2 regional final at the time of his selection. Dragani posted a 5-0 record on the mound with a 0.18 ERA, recording 59 strikeouts in 37.2 innings through 18 games. Ranked as the state's No. 5 recruit in the Class of 2017 by Perfect Game, he also batted .436 with 21 runs scored and a 1.190 OPS entering the regional title game.

A member of the National Honor Society, Dragani has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, his church youth group and his school's annual blood drive. "I have never had a player with as high a baseball IQ and who developed his skills with as much relentless effort as Ben Dragani," said Catholic Memorial High head coach Tim Gotzler. "He has very clean mechanics on the mound with an arsenal that features an 89-MPH fastball along with a slider and changeup. He works both sides of the plate and all areas of the strike zone with all three pitches."

Dragani has maintained a 4.13 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at the University of Michigan 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.

Dragani joins recent Gatorade Wisconsin Baseball Players of the Year Gavin Lux (2015-16, Indian Trail High School), Jack Eagan (2014-15, Wautoma High School), Jeren Kendall (2013-14, Holmen High School), Scott Schreiber (2012-13, Kimberly High School), Kyle Cody (2011-12, McDonell Central Catholic High School), Sam Mahar (2010-11, Tremper High School), Bobby Juan (2009-10, Central High School), Brad Schreiber (2008-09, Kimberly High School), Phil Schreiber (2007-08, Kaukauna High School), and Nick Rice (2006-07, Tremper 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.

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