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**MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® IDAHO SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 5, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Lexi Knauss of Meridian High School as its 2016-17 Gatorade Idaho Softball Player of the Year. Knauss is the first Gatorade Idaho Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Meridian 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 Knauss as Idaho's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Knauss joins an elite alumni association of past state softball award-winners, including Catherine Osterman (2000-01, Cy Spring High School, Texas), Kelsey Stewart (2009-10, Arkansas City High School, Kan.), Carley Hoover (2012-13 D.W. Daniel High School, S.C.), Jenna Lilley (2012-13, Hoover High School, Ohio), Morgan Zerkle (2012-13 Cabell Midland High School, W. Va.), and Rachel Garcia (2014-15, Highland High School, Calif.).

The 5-foot-2 senior shortstop led the Warriors (19-9) to the Class 5A state tournament this past season. Knauss compiled a .552 batting average with 19 doubles, 11 home runs, 43 RBI and 50 runs scored. She also stole 22 bases and posted an OPS of 1.793. The Class 5A Southern Idaho Conference Player of the Year, Knauss is a three-time All-Conference honoree.

Knauss has volunteered locally on behalf of Ronald McDonald House Charities and Meals on Wheels. "Lexi Knauss is a great player," said Dean Diffin, head coach at Centennial High School. "She's one of the top hitters in the South, she has great hands and she covers a lot of ground. She has the ability to take over a game."

Knauss has maintained a 3.94 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Montana 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.

Knauss joins recent Gatorade Idaho Softball Players of the Year Bradie Fillmore (2015-16 & 2014-15, Eagle High School), Vanessa Shippy (2013-14, Lake City High School), Casey Stangel (2012-13 & 2011-12, Lake City High School), Nickayla Skinner (2009-10 & 2008-09, Mountain Home High School), Joni Cook (2007-08, Eagle High School), and Britney Croner (2006-07, Bishop Kelly High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Lexi 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).

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