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**PULASKI ACADEMY STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 11, 2017) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Layne Hatcher of Pulaski Academy as its 2017-18 Gatorade Arkansas Football Player of the Year. Hatcher is the third Gatorade Arkansas Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Pulaski 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 field, distinguishes Hatcher as Arkansas' best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Hatcher joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Mitchell Trubisky (2012-13, Mentor High School, Ohio), Greg Olsen (2002-03, Wayne Hills High School, N.J.), Matthew Stafford (2005-06 Highland Park High School, Texas), Harrison Smith (2006-07 Knoxville Catholic High School, Tenn.), Latavius Murray (2007-08, Onondaga High School, N.Y.), Brock Osweiler (2008-09, Flathead High School, Mont.) and Leonard Fournette (2014-15 & 2012-13, St. Augustine High School, La.).

The 6-foot-1, 203-pound senior quarterback passed for 5,766 yards and 66 touchdowns this past season, leading the Bruins to a 14-0 record and their fourth consecutive Class 5A state championship. Hatcher completed 382 of 529 passes, with 11 interceptions, and set state career passing records for both yards (15,907) and touchdowns (188). A three-time All-State selection, he also broke the state single-game record for passing yards, with 757, and was named MVP of the Class 5A state finals for the second straight season.

Also a state championship wrestler and a baseball standout, Hatcher has volunteered locally on behalf of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Centers for Youth and Families Champions of Hope program. "I think Layne Hatcher is the best quarterback in the state," said John Shannon, head coach at Beebe High. "He can make all the throws and he never gets rattled under pressure. The best thing about him is that he's a competitor."

Hatcher has maintained a 3.53 GPA in the classroom. He remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Hatcher joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Football Players of the Year Taylor Powell (2016-17, Fayetteville High School), McTelvin Agim (2015-16, Hope High School), Ty Storey (2014-15 & 2013-14, Charleston High School), Austin Allen (2012-13, Fayetteville High School), Fredi Knighten (2011-12, Pulaski Academy), Kiehl Frazier (2010-11, Shiloh Christian School), and Michael Dyer (2009-10, Little Rock Christian Academy) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Hatcher 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 <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.