

Contact: John Manzo (312-729-3656)

**WEST MONROE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE LOUISIANA 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 Slade Bolden of West Monroe High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Louisiana Football Player of the Year. Bolden is the second Gatorade Louisiana Football Player of the Year to be chosen from West Monroe 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 Bolden as Louisiana's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award to be announced in December, Bolden 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 5-foot-11, 198-pound senior quarterback passed for 1,622 yards and 20 touchdowns this past season, leading the Rebels (13-1) to the Class 5A state semifinals. Bolden also rushed for 1,460 yards and 20 scores on 215 carries. A First Team All-State selection as a junior, he concluded his prep football career with 3,997 rushing yards and 102 total touchdowns.

Bolden has volunteered locally as part of multiple community beautification projects and with the Special Olympics. He has also donated his time as a youth football coach. "Slade Bolden is an awesome young man," said Jeff Fitzgerald, head coach of Ouachita Parish High. "He is the fiercest competitor I have ever coached against. He's a tremendous athlete and has a will to win like no other I've ever seen."

Bolden has maintained a 4.0 GPA and ranks No. 1 in his class. He has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Alabama in the fall of 2018.

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.

Bolden joins recent Gatorade Louisiana Football Players of the Year Keytaon Thompson (2016-17, Landry-Walker High School), Lindsey Scott (2015-16, Zachary High School), Deshawn Capers-Smith (2014-15, Warren Easton Charter High School), Leonard Fournette (2013-14 & 2012-13, St. Augustine High School), Landon Collins (2011-12, Dutchtown High School), Anthony Johnson (2010-11, O. Perry Walker High School), and Kenny Hilliard (2009-10, Patterson High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Bolden 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/>.