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**CENTURY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE® NORTH DAKOTA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 19, 2018) — In its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Lauren Ware of Century High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade North Dakota Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Ware is the second Gatorade North Dakota Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Century 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 Ware as North Dakota's best high school girls basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Basketball Player of the Year award announced in March, Ware joins an elite alumni association of past state girls basketball award-winners, including Maya Moore (2005-06 Collins Hill HS, Ga.), Rashanda McCants (2004-05, Asheville HS, N.C.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Diana Taurasi (1998-99 & 1999-00, Don Antonio Lugo HS, Calif.), Shyra Ely (1999-00, Ben Davis HS, Ind.) and Lisa Leslie (1988-89, Morningside HS, Calif.).

The 6-foot-4 sophomore forward led the Patriots to a 26-1 record and the Class A state championship this past season. Ware averaged 17.1 points, 11.4 rebounds, 3.9 blocks, 2.1 assists and 1.9 steals per game while shooting 56.9 percent from inside the 3-point arc. A two-time member of both the Western Dakota Association All-Conference team and the Class A All-Tournament Team, Ware scored 24 points to go with 12 rebounds and five blocks in the Patriots' 55-51 win over Mandan in the Class A state title game.

Also a standout volleyball player, Ware has volunteered locally at food drives, an animal shelter and on behalf of youth basketball and volleyball camps. She also has donated her time to her school's peer-to-peer program, which encourages students with disabilities to become involved in activities. "Lauren is so tough because she is 6-foot-4 and plays like a guard," said James Hayden, head coach at Dickinson High. "Defensively, in my opinion, she is the best in the state. This, I believe, sets her apart from anyone else."

Ware has maintained a weighted 3.86 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her junior year of high school in the 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.

Ware joins recent Gatorade North Dakota Girls Basketball Players of the Year Tylee Irwin (2016-17, Wahpeton High School), Sarah Jacobson (2015-16, Shanley High School), Hannah Stewart (2014-15, Bishop Ryan Catholic High School), Sarah Jacobson (2013-14, Shanley High School), Hannah Larson (2012-13, Century High School), Holly Johnson (2011-12, Minot High School), Caitlin Farroh (2010-11, Grand Forks Central High School), Meghan Roehrich (2009-10, Fargo South High School), Kelsey Sigl (2008-09, Bismarck High School), Alex Feeney (2007-08, Bismarck High School), and Jessica Kielpinski (2006-07, Mandan High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

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

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