

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729- 3685)

**WILLIAM MONROE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE® VIRGINIA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 19, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Samantha Brunelle of William Monroe High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Virginia Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Brunelle is the first Gatorade Virginia Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from William 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 Brunelle as Virginia'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, Brunelle 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-3 junior guard and forward averaged 30.0 points, 15.6 rebounds, 3.5 assists, 3.0 blocks and 2.2 steals per game this past season, leading the Dragons (23-2) to the Class 3 state quarterfinals. A USA TODAY Third-Team All-American selection as a sophomore, Brunelle was a member of the USA Basketball Under-16 Women's National Team that won a gold medal at the 2017 FIBA Americas U16 Championship in Argentina. She is rated as the nation's No. 1 recruit in the Class of 2019 by both espnW and the Blue Star Basketball Report and concluded her junior year with 2,000 points and 1,139 rebounds in her prep basketball career.

Brunelle organized and hosted the Hoops for Houston Clinic this fall to benefit Houston-area schools after Hurricane Harvey. She has volunteered locally as a youth mentor and has donated her time to multiple community service initiatives as part of William Monroe's National Honor Society. "What makes Samantha so dangerous on the court is that she's a threat from anywhere," said Christine Simmons, head coach of Warren County High. "Whether it's inside the paint or beyond the 3-point line. She is a complete basketball player and can play any position or produce from any location on the court."

Brunelle has maintained a weighted 4.15 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school 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.

Brunelle joins recent Gatorade Virginia Girls Basketball Players of the Year Megan Walker (2016-17 & 2015-16, Monacan High School), Taja Cole (2014-15, L.C. Bird High School), Dorothy Adomako (2013-14, Cosby High School), Breyana Mason (2012-13, Forest Park High School), Caroline Coyer (2011-12, Oakton High School), Elizabeth Williams (2010-11 & 2009-10, Princess Anne High School), Tierra Ruffin-Pratt (2008-09 & 2007-08, T.C. Williams High School), and Jasmine Thomas (2006-07, Oakton High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Samantha 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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