

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kelsey Rhoney (312-729-3685)

**MOUNTAIN RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARIZONA BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 29, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Matt Liberatore of Mountain Ridge High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Arizona Baseball Player of the Year. Liberatore is the first Gatorade Arizona Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Mountain Ridge 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 Liberatore as Arizona's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year, Liberatore joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo High School, Mich.), Jon Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Preparatory School, Wash.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman High School, Tenn.), Clayton Kershaw (2005-06, Highland Park High School, Texas), Rick Porcello (2006-2007, Seaton Hall Preparatory School, N.J.) and Kris Bryant (2009-10, Bonanza High School, Nev.).

The 6-foot-5, 200-pound senior left-handed pitcher compiled an 8-1 record on the mound with a 0.93 ERA this past season, leading the Mountain Lions (21-11-1) to the Conference 6A state championship game. Liberatore struck out 104 batters while allowing just 28 hits and 25 walks in 60.1 innings pitched. Rated as the No. 2 recruit in the Class of 2018 by Perfect Game, he won a gold medal with the Team USA at the 2017 U-18 World Cup in Canada.

Liberatore has volunteered locally at a homeless shelter and as a youth baseball coach. He has also donated his time to a fundraising campaign to benefit Rady's Children's Hospital-San Diego.

"Matthew Liberatore is the hardest-working player I have ever coached," said Artie Cox, head coach of Mountain Ridge High. "His stats over these four years have been off the charts."

Liberatore has maintained a weighted 4.14 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play baseball on scholarship at the University of Arizona this fall, but is projected as an early-round selection in June's Major League Baseball draft.

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.

Liberatore joins recent Gatorade Arizona Baseball Players of the Year Boyd Vander Kooi (2016-17, Skyline High School), Nick Brueser (2015-16, Hamilton High School), Tyler Wyatt (2014-15, Liberty High School), Tyler Frost (2013-14, Greenway High School), Riley Unroe (2012-13, Desert Ridge High School), Mitch Nay (2011-12, Hamilton High School), Kevin Cron (2010-11, Mountain Pointe High School), Taylor Kaczmarek (2009-10, Desert Ridge), Jake Barrett (2008-09, Desert Ridge), Jaff Decker (2007-08, Sunrise Mountain), and Tim Alderson (2006-07, Horizon) among the state's list of former award winners.

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

###