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**CENTRAL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS 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 Steve Hajjar of Central Catholic High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Massachusetts Baseball Player of the Year. Hajjar is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Central Catholic 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 Hajjar as Massachusetts' best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year, Hajjar 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-4, 190-pound senior left-handed pitcher and first baseman had led the Raiders to a 12-4 record at the time of his selection. Hajjar owned a 2-1 record with a 0.26 earned run average and 41 strikeouts in 27 innings pitched through 16 games, allowing just 12 hits and one walk. He had surrendered just two unearned runs in his five starts. At the plate, Hajjar produced a .350 batting average with 11 runs scored, a .490 on-base percentage and a .500 slugging percentage. The 2017 Merrimack Valley Conference Player of the Year, he has led the Raiders to three straight MVC titles.

Hajjar has volunteered locally at a soup kitchen and homeless shelter.

"Steve Hajjar is an outstanding pitcher who can dominate games and is also an outstanding hitter and fielder," said Mike O'Keefe, head coach of Chelmsford High. "He commands many pitches and if he has them all going he is pretty much unhittable at the high-school level."

Hajjar has maintained a weighted 4.39 GPA in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play baseball on scholarship at the University of Michigan 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.

Hajjar joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Baseball Players of the Year Matt Tabor (2016-17, Milton Academy), Anthony Videtto (2015-16, Silver Lake Regional High School), Joe Walsh (2014-15, Plymouth North High School), Joe Freiday (2013-14, Bridgewater-Raynham Regional High School), Ben Bowden (2012-13, Lynn English High School), Rhett Wiseman (2011-12, Buckingham Browne & Nichols School), John Gorman (2010-11, Catholic Memorial School), Kevin Ziomek (2009-10, Amherst Regional High School), Kyle McKenzie (2008-09, Thayer Academy), Scott Weismann (2007-08, Acton-Boxborough High School), and Jack McGeary (2006-07, Roxbury Latin School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Steve 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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