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## **CREIGHTON PREP STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED GATORADE® NEBRASKA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (March 15, 2019) — In its 34<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced **Akol Arop of Creighton Prep** as its **2018-19 Gatorade Nebraska Boys Basketball Player of the Year**. Arop is the fourth Gatorade Nebraska Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Creighton Prep.

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 Arop as Nebraska's best high school boys basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced in March, Arop joins an elite alumni association of past state boys basketball award winners, including Karl-Anthony Towns (2012-13 & 2013-14, St. Joseph High School, N.J.), Dwight Howard (2003-04, Southwest Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.), Chris Bosh (2001-02, Lincoln High School, Texas), Paul Pierce (1994-95, Inglewood High School, Calif.), Chauncey Billups (1993-94 & 1994-95, George Washington High School, Colo.) and Jason Kidd (1991-92, St. Joseph Notre Dame High School, Calif.).

The 6-foot-6, 190-pound senior forward led the Junior Jays to a 22-5 record and the Class A quarterfinals this past season. Arop averaged 19.4 points, 10.9 rebounds, and 2.6 blocks per game, converting 62.0 percent of his field goal attempts. A three-time All-State and All-Metro selection, he was also named to the Omaha World-Herald All-Nebraska First Team and the Lincoln Journal Star Super-State First Team.

A tutor for elementary school students, Arop has volunteered locally on behalf of community clean-up initiatives. "Akol Arop is an absolutely elite-level athlete," said Doug Woodard, head coach at Bellevue West High. "He can block shots and play well above the rim. He has an excellent natural touch and finishes at an incredibly high level from 15 feet in."

Arop has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Nebraska 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.

Arop joins Gatorade Nebraska Boys Basketball Players of the Year Shereef Mitchell (2017-18, Burke High School), Teddy Allen (2016-17, Boys Town High School), Aguek Arop (2015-16, Omaha South High School), and Tyler Hagedorn (2014-15, Norfolk High School) among the state's list of former award winners.

As a part of Gatorade's cause marketing platform "Play it Forward," Arop also has the opportunity to award a \$1,000 grant to a local or national youth sports organization of his choosing. He is also eligible to submit an essay to win one of twelve \$10,000 spotlight grants for the organization of choice, which will be announced throughout the year.

Since the program's inception in 1985, Gatorade Player of the Year award recipients have won hundreds of professional and college championships, and many have also turned into pillars in their communities, becoming coaches, business owners and educators.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit [www.Gatorade.com/POY](http://www.Gatorade.com/POY), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](https://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](https://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

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