

**INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE TENNESSEE BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 21, 2020) — In its 35th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company today announced Robert Hassell of Independence High School as its 2019-20 Gatorade Tennessee Baseball Player of the Year. Hassell is the first Gatorade Tennessee Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Independence 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 Hassell as Tennessee's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award to be announced in May, Hassell joins an elite alumni association of 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 state's returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-2, 185-pound senior outfielder and left-handed pitcher led the USA Baseball 18U National team to a silver medal at the Baseball World Cup in August. Hassell topped the entire tournament field in runs, hits and RBI and he tied for the top spot with two home runs. He concluded his prep baseball career with a .415 batting average, 96 runs, 89 RBI and 22 home runs. Ranked as the nation's No. 5 prospect in the Class of 2020 by Baseball America, he was named the 2019 World Baseball/Softball Confederation's International Player of the Year.

Hassell has volunteered locally as a youth baseball coach. "Robert had a great 2019. He is the best player in the state and showed that again throughout last summer," said Mike McLaury, head coach of Independence High School. "He is a very hard-working and humble young man."

Hassell has maintained a B-plus average in the classroom. He has signed a national letter of intent to play baseball on scholarship at Vanderbilt University, 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 and field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. From the 12 national winners, one male and one female athlete are each named Gatorade High School Athlete of the Year. In all, 607 athletes are honored each year.

Two-time winner Hassell joins recent Gatorade Tennessee Baseball Players of the Year Ryan Weathers (2017-18, Loretto High School), Spencer Strider (2016-17, Christian Academy of Knoxville), Zach Linginfelter (2015-16, Sevier County High School), and Donny Everett (2014-15, Clarksville High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

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, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/Gatorade.

###

