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**CENTENNIAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® CALIFORNIA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 2, 2010) — In its third decade of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Cody Kessler of Centennial High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade California Football Player of the Year. Kessler is the first Gatorade California Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Centennial 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 Kessler as California's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Kessler joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Wes Welker (1999-00, Heritage Hall HS, Okla.), Terrell Suggs (1999-00, Hamilton HS, Ariz.), Anquan Boldin (1998-99, Pahokee HS, Fla.) and Jerome Bettis (1989-90, Mackenzie HS, Mich.).

The 6-foot-2, 221-pound senior quarterback has led the Golden Hawks to a 10-1 record and the Division I CIF-Central Section semifinals against Bakersfield High, scheduled for Dec. 3. At the time of his selection, Kessler had passed for 2,595 yards and 34 touchdowns, completing 154-of-221 attempts while throwing just one interception. A 2011 U.S. Army All-American and the No. 2 ranked prep quarterback in the nation by Rivals.com, Kessler has also rushed for 336 yards on 65 carries with eight touchdowns.

Kessler has maintained a 3.45 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered locally on behalf of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and as part of fundraising campaigns to benefit breast cancer research.

"Cody Kessler is by far the best quarterback I have ever coached against in my 11 years of coaching," said Jerald Pierucci, head coach of rival East Bakersfield High. "The stats show that he is one of the best in California and probably the country, but the thing I have always been impressed with is his maturity. When it comes to handling all the success he's had, he has kept things in perspective and always puts his team first."

Kessler has verbally committed to play football on scholarship at the University of Southern California beginning in the fall of 2011.

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 ESPN RISE and the Gatorade high school sports leadership team, 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.

Kessler joins recent Gatorade California Football Players of the Year Malcolm Jones (2009-10, Oaks Christian School), Ryan Kasdorf (2008-09, Notre Dame) and Matt Barkley (2007-08, Mater Dei) among the state's list of former award winners.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. 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 [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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