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**PETAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® MISSISSIPPI 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 Anthony Alford of Petal High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Mississippi Football Player of the Year. Alford is the first Gatorade Mississippi Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Petal 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 Alford as Mississippi's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Alford 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-1, 210-pound junior quarterback led the Panthers to a 9-3 record and the Class 6A playoffs this past season. Alford passed for 1,399 yards and 16 touchdowns, completing 75-of-138 attempts and throwing just five interceptions. Alford also rushed for 1,253 yards and 19 touchdowns on 169 carries. Playing with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee, Alford passed for three touchdowns and ran for one TD in Petal's 35-34 loss to Oak Grove High in the first round of the Class 6A playoffs. He is also a standout outfielder for the Petal baseball team and a member of the 2010 USA Junior Olympic National Team.

Alford has maintained an A-minus average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally as a Big Brother/Big Sister mentor and as a youth baseball coach.

"He's the best all-around athlete we faced this year," said Doug Hoehn, head coach of rival Hattiesburg High. "He runs the ball really well with good vision. He's extremely strong, stronger than he looks. He's physical and elusive, and he's throwing the football pretty darn good. This year, he could hurt you both ways."

Alford will begin his senior year of high school next 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 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.

Alford joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Football Players of the Year Dylan Favre (2009-10, St. Stanislaus College), Tyler Russell (2008-09, Meridian) and Charles Mitchell (2007-08, Clarksdale) 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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