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**BLACKMAN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® TENNESSEE 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 I'Tavius Mathers of Blackman High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Tennessee Football Player of the Year. Mathers is the first Gatorade Tennessee Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Blackman 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 Mathers as Tennessee's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Mathers 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 5-foot-10, 185-pound junior running back rushed for 2,614 yards and 29 touchdowns on 240 carries this past season, leading the Blaze (11-2) to the Class 6A quarterfinals. A finalist for the Tennessee Titans Mr. Football Class AAA Back award, Mathers also returned two kickoffs for scores and set school records for rushing yards in a game and single-season.

Mathers has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally as part of a cleanup crew assisting tornado victims and has raised funds to benefit Haiti disaster relief.

"Mathers has speed and power, great acceleration, great moves," said Louis Thompson, head coach of rival Lincoln County High. "He made it look like we'd never worked on tackling. He's the best back I've seen in the state in the last 10-12 years."

Mathers 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.

Mathers joins recent Gatorade Tennessee Football Players of the Year JaRon Toney (2009-10, Alcoa), Marsalis Teague (2008-09, Henry County) and Curt Phillips (2007-08, Sullivan South) 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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