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**COWAN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® INDIANA BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 2, 2010) — In its 25th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Justin O'Conner of Cowan High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Indiana Baseball Player of the Year. O'Conner is the first Gatorade Indiana Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Cowan 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 O'Conner as Indiana's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award announced in June, O'Conner joins an elite alumni association of past state baseball award winners, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Roy Halladay (1994-95, Arvada West HS, Colo.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman HS, Tenn.), Chipper Jones (1989-90, Bolles School, Fla.), Derek Lee (1992-93, El Camino HS, Calif.) and John Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Prep, Wash.).

The 6-foot, 190-pound senior shortstop and right-handed pitcher led the Blackhawks (19-5) to the Class A sectional tournament, scheduled to begin May 31, batting .479 with eight home runs, 44 RBIs and a 1.020 slugging percentage at the time of his selection, while posting a 4-0 record on the mound with two saves, a 1.22 ERA and 53 strikeouts in 23 innings. 2009 Aflac All-American and the 2009 *Muncie Star* Press Athlete of the Year, O'Conner is rated the nation's No. 29 prospect in the Class of 2010 by Baseball America.

O'Conner has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally as part of multiple community clean-up initiatives and as a youth baseball coach and umpire.

"Justin O'Conner is a flat-out stud," said Lea Selvey, head coach of rival Jay County High. "I just sit back and say 'wow' every time I see him play. I have not seen anyone better in my 25 years of coaching. He's not selfish and he absolutely wants to win every time he plays."

O'Conner has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at Vanderbilt University this fall, but is projected as an early round selection in this month's Major League Baseball First-Year Player 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 & 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.

O'Conner joins recent Gatorade Indiana Baseball Players of the Year Cameron Perkins (2008-09, Southport), Alex Meyer (2007-08, Greensburg Community) and Jarrod Parker (2006-07, Norwell) 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.

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