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**FREE STATE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® KANSAS BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 2, 2010) — In its 25<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Cody Kukuk of Free State High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Kansas Baseball Player of the Year. Kukuk is the first Gatorade Kansas Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Free State 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 Kukuk as Kansas' best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award announced in June, Kukuk 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-4 junior left-handed pitcher, outfielder and first baseman led the Firebirds to the Class 6A state final posting a 9-0 record, a 0.98 ERA and 88 strikeouts in 53.1 innings while batting .440 with eight home runs, 34 RBIs and a 1.090 slugging percentage. A 2009 Second Team All-State selection, Kukuk pitched 6.1 hitless innings in a win over Olathe South High on May 4.

Kukuk has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally at a soup kitchen, as part of fund-raising initiatives on behalf of an animal hospital and as a youth baseball coach.

"Cody Kukuk is a multi-talented baseball player who excels as both a pitcher and a hitter," said Lawrence Free State Head Coach Mike Hill. "He has a very good chance to be high draft pick after he graduates next year. He is the real deal."

Kukuk has verbally committed to play baseball on scholarship at the University of Kansas 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.

Kukuk joins recent Gatorade Kansas Baseball Players of the Year Garrett Gould (2008-09, Maize), Lee Ridenhour (2007-08, Shawnee Mission West) and Derek Norris (2007-08, Goddard) 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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