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**CENTENNIAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® ILLINOIS BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 18, 2010) — In its 25th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Rayvonte Rice of Centennial High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Illinois Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Rice is the first Gatorade Illinois Boys Basketball 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 court, distinguishes Rice as Illinois' best high school boys basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced in March, Rice joins an elite alumni association of past state boys basketball award winners, including Chris Paul (2002-03, West Forsyth HS, N.C.), Kevin Garnett (1992-93, Maudlin HS, S.C.), Chauncey Billups (1993-94 & 1994-95, George Washington HS, Colo.), Jason Kidd (1991-92, St. Joseph Notre Dame HS, Calif.), Paul Pierce (1994-95, Inglewood HS, Calif.) and Chris Bosh (2001-02, Lincoln HS, Texas).

The 6-foot-3, 220-pound senior shooting guard averaged 24.0 points, 6.1 rebounds, 2.8 steals and 1.8 assists per game in leading the Chargers (30-1) to Tuesday's Class 4A state tournament super-sectional round, where they defeated Cahokia, 80-74, on the strength of 34 points from Rice. Centennial will face Hillcrest in the state semifinals scheduled for March 19. A returning Third Team All-State selection as named by the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association, Rice averaged 16.8 points, 7.3 rebounds, 3.0 steals and 2.4 assists per game as a junior, capturing Class 3A state championship game Most Valuable Player honors during the Chargers' 2008-09 state title run.

Rice has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has donated his time locally as a youth basketball instructor, at the Humane Society and as a tutor to junior high students.

"He presents such a mismatch defensively for almost any opponent," said Champaign Centennial Head Coach Tim Lavin. "He is 6-foot-3 and one of the better ball-handlers around. If teams put a smaller, quicker guard on him, he can post them up and score at will from inside. If they put a big man on him, he can score from the outside. He is also deceptively quick and can get by defenders. His explosiveness off the floor has created several highlight-reel quality dunks this season and last. Defensively, he has long arms and quick hands that lead to about three steals a game."

Rice has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at Iowa's Drake University this 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.

Rice joins recent Gatorade Illinois Boys Basketball Players of the Year Matt Vogrich (2008-09, Lake Forest), Michael Dunigan (2007-08, Farragut Career Academy), and Derrick Rose (2006-07, Simeon) among the state's list of former award winners.

To celebrate the award's 25th anniversary, Gatorade wants you to vote for the All-Time Greatest Players of the Year at gatorade.com/POY25. 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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