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Contact: Julie Mason (412-561-1014)

**WICHITA HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® KANSAS 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 Perry Ellis of Wichita Heights High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Kansas Boys Basketball Player of the Year.

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 Ellis as Kansas' 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, Ellis 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 state's returning Gatorade Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Ellis led the Falcons (23-2) to a second consecutive Class 6A state tournament title this past season, averaging 22.2 points, 10.4 rebounds, 1.6 assists, 1.2 blocks and 1.1 steals per game. A 2009-10 ESPN RISE Southwest Region Boys Basketball Player of the Week, the 6-foot-8, 215-pound sophomore power forward clicked for 20 points and 11 rebounds in the 56-40 state championship game victory against Blue Valley Northwest. Also a returning Class 6A First Team All-State selection as named by the Kansas Basketball Coaches Association and a member of the USA Basketball Men's Developmental National Team, he averaged 19.2 points and 11.7 rebounds as a freshman.

Ellis has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom and ranks No. 1 in his class. He has volunteered locally as youth basketball instructor, as part of several community-cleanup service initiatives and as a motivational speaker for youth athletes, addressing the importance of education and positive thinking.

"He stepped his game up," said Lonnie Lollar, head coach of rival Bishop Carroll High. "Let's face it: He's got back-to-back state championships. Ellis doesn't make a lot of mistakes. He passes the ball well, he rebounds well, he can jump well and he can handle the ball extremely well for a 6-foot-8 guy. He can shoot well from the perimeter. And he's a good teammate. He's very, very special."

Ellis will begin his junior year of high school 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.

Ellis joins recent Gatorade Kansas Boys Basketball Players of the Year Travis Releford (2007-08, Bishop Miege) and Tyrel Reed (2006-07, Burlington) 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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