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**PUTNAM CITY WEST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® OKLAHOMA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 18, 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 Tyler Neal of Putnam City West High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Neal is the second Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Putnam City West 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 Neal as Oklahoma's 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, Neal 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-6 senior forward led the Patriots (21-6) to the Class 6A semifinals this past season, averaging 18.6 points and 8.3 rebounds per game while shooting at 65 percent (95-for-146) from inside the arc. A 2009 First Team All-State selection, Neal helped lead Putnam City West to its first state tournament berth in 33 years. In the Patriots' 53-41 quarterfinals win over Muskogee High, Neal led all scorers with 17 points and also grabbed 10 rebounds.

Neal has maintained a 3.70 GPA in the classroom. An active member of his church community, he has been a member of his school's student government organization and has volunteered locally as a youth basketball coach.

"Neal has got good game and a very nice skill set," said A.D. Burtschi, head coach of rival Putnam City High. "Without him and the things he does, they wouldn't be nearly as good. When you consider that this is the first time they've gone to the state tournament in more than 30 years, you have to figure that he literally changed the landscape of basketball over there."

Neal remains undecided upon a college destination.

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.

Neal joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Boys Basketball Players of the Year Xavier Henry (2008-09 & 2007-08, Putnam City) and Blake Griffin (2006-07, Oklahoma Christian School) among the state's list of former award winners.

To celebrate the award's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Gatorade wants you to vote for the All-Time Greatest Players of the Year at [gatorade.com/POY25](http://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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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