

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Julie Mason (412-561-1014)

**FORT DORCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® SOUTH CAROLINA 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 RJ Slawson of Fort Dorchester High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade South Carolina Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Slawson is the first Gatorade South Carolina Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Fort Dorchester 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 Slawson as South Carolina'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, Slawson 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-8, 195-pound senior guard/forward led the Patriots (22-4) to the Class 4A quarterfinals this past season, averaging 22.7 points, 12.4 rebounds, 6.7 blocks and 3.1 assists per game. A 2009 First Team All-State selection, Slawson led all scorers with 22 points to help Fort Dorchester rally to beat Wando High in the second round of the state tournament. Slawson is ranked as the nation's No. 82 in the Class of 2010 by ESPNU.

Slawson has maintained a 3.42 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally as a summer basketball camp counselor, a youth mentor for elementary school students and as a caretaker for the elderly.

"R.J. Slawson is a complete game-changer," said Fort Dorchester High Head Coach Leon Wheaton. "He is the type of guy who completely fills up the stat sheet in each category. He is a very humble player who has changed the basketball atmosphere at Fort Dorchester."

Slawson has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of South Carolina 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.

Slawson joins recent Gatorade South Carolina Boys Basketball Players of the Year Milton Jennings (2008-09 & 2007-08, Pinewood Preparatory School) and Trevor Deloach (2006-07, Saluda) 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.

###