

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Julie Mason (412-561-1014)

**MOUNT IDA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® ARKANSAS BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 22, 2010) — In its 25th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Andrew Irwin of Mount Ida High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Track & Field Athlete 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 track, distinguishes Irwin as Arkansas' best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Irwin joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Meb Keflezighi (1993-94, San Diego HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Kevin Garnett (1992-93, Maudlin HS, S.C.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.) and Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.).

The 6-foot-3, 168-pound junior won the pole vault at the Arkansas Meet of Champions this spring with a clearance of 17 feet, the nation's fifth-best height among prep competitors at the time of his selection. He also won a Class 2A state title with a clearance of 14 feet. A 2010 Arkansas Track and Field Coaches Association All-Arkansas Track and Field Team selection, Irwin also recorded the nation's top indoor mark in the pole vault in 2010—the second best mark of all-time—when he cleared 17 feet, 6.25 inches at the Arkansas Gravity Cheater Meet.

Irwin has maintained a 3.43 GPA in the classroom. An active member of his church community, he has volunteered locally on behalf of the Future Farmers of America.

"Andrew Irwin has grown and matured into one of the finest pole-vaulters in the nation," said Morry Sanders, founder of the Arkansas Vault Club. "His athletic accomplishments really speak for themselves and he's a great ambassador for the sport. He has become such a role model for so many other kids."

Irwin will begin his senior 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.

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.

###