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Contact: Julie Mason (412-561-1014)

**INCARNATE WORD ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MISSOURI GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 11, 2010) — In its 25th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Jazmin Hitchens of Incarnate Word Academy as its 2009-10 Gatorade Missouri Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Hitchens is the third Gatorade Missouri Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Incarnate Word Academy.

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 Hitchens as Missouri's best high school girls basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Basketball Player of the Year award announced in March, Hitchens joins an elite alumni association of past state girls basketball award-winners, including Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Diana Taurasi (1998-99 & 1999-00, Don Antonio Lugo HS, Calif.), Maya Moore (2005-06 Collins Hill HS, Ga.), Rashanda McCants (2004-05, Asheville HS, N.C.), Shyra Ely (1999-00, Ben Davis HS, Ind.) and Lisa Leslie (1988-89, Morningside HS, Calif.)

The 5-foot-11 senior forward has led the Knights (28-1) to a top-10 national ranking and the Class 5 state tournament semifinals, scheduled for March 11. Entering the postseason's final four round, Hitchens boasted averages of 17.5 points, 5.8 rebounds, 4.5 steals, 2.5 assists and 1.2 blocks per game. A returning Class 5 First Team All-State selection as named by the Missouri Basketball Coaches Association and Missouri Sportswriters and Sportscasters Association, Hitchens has shot 48.2 percent from the field and 66.5 percent from the free-throw line. She was the lone Missourian to be named a Women's Basketball Coaches Association High School 2010 All-America Game Honorable Mention selection.

Hitchens has maintained a 3.16 GPA in the classroom. In addition to donating her time as a youth basketball instructor for the past four summers, she has volunteered as part of fundraising efforts to benefit victims of the recent earthquake in Haiti.

"Jazmin Hitchens is a tremendous athlete," said Incarnate Word Head Coach Dan Rolfes. "On offense, she leads us in scoring. She can post up, dribble penetrate, pass, run in transition and shoot the 3. On defense, she is our most dangerous defender with almost five steals per game. She always guards the other team's best player, regardless if they are a guard or post. She is as important off the court, because she is our team leader, biggest competitor and hardest worker."

Hitchens has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at Ball State 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.

Hitchens joins recent Gatorade Missouri Girls Basketball Players of the Year Katherine Harry (2008-09, Rock Bridge), Kathleen Scheer (2007-08, New Haven), and Tyra White (2006-07, Hickman Mills) 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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