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Contact: Julie Mason (412-561-1014)

**BUTTE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MONTANA 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 Lexie Nelson of Butte High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Nelson is the first Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Butte 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 Nelson as Montana'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, Nelson 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-9 senior guard has led the Bulldogs (17-4) to the 2010 Class AA state quarterfinals, scheduled for March 11. Entering the postseason's quarterfinal round, Nelson boasted averages of 24.5 points, 4.7 rebounds, 2.4 assists and 1.9 steals per game. A two-time *Great Falls Tribune* Super State Team honoree and a 2010 McDonald's All-American Game selection committee nominee, Nelson ranked as Butte High's all-time leading scorer in points (1,635) as well as 3-pointers, 3-point field goal percentage, free throws made and free throws attempted at the time of her selection.

Nelson has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Butte High student council, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and as a peer/youth tutor. Nelson has also donated her time participating in area food drives and as a youth basketball instructor.

"Lexie Nelson is irreplaceable—she doesn't have too many highs or lows and plays her best when it matters the most," said Kerry Pickett, Nelson's coach with the Spokane Sandpipers AAU team. "She's a tremendous player in terms of feel for the game and leadership on the court. She can do whatever is necessary to succeed and is willing to do that."

Nelson has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Montana 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.

Nelson joins recent Gatorade Montana Girls Basketball Players of the Year Joslyn Tinkle (2008-09 & 2007-08, Big Sky) and Kirsten Tilleman (2006-07, Bozeman) 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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