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**J.L. MANN ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH CAROLINA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 24, 2010) — In its 25th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Briana Nelson of J.L. Mann Academy as its 2009-10 Gatorade South Carolina Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Nelson is the first Gatorade South Carolina Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from J.L. Mann 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 track, distinguishes Nelson as South Carolina's best high school girls track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Nelson joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Allyson Felix (2001-02, Los Angeles Baptist, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Iowa) and Bianca Knight (2006-07, Ridgeland HS, Miss.).

The state's two-time returning Gatorade Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year, the 5-foot-8 senior swept the sprints at the Class AAA state meet for a second straight year this spring, leading the Patriots to the state team title. Nelson won the 100-meter dash with a time of 12.28 seconds, the 200 in 24.19 and the 400 in 53.41. At April's Arcadia Invitational in California, she broke the tape in the 400 in 53.32, the nation's No. 8 clocking among prep competitors at the time of her selection. A 19-time state champion, Nelson won the 400 and the 4x400 meter relay five times at the Class AAA state meet during her high school career. She was also a three-time winner of the 200, a two-time winner of the 100 and a member of four championship 4x100 relay squads.

Nelson has maintained a weighted 4.06 GPA in the classroom. A member of the J.L. Mann Student Council, she plays clarinet in the school's symphonic band and sings in her church's youth choir. She has volunteered locally at a food bank and with the Special Olympics.

"Briana Nelson, she leaves you with your mouth open," said John Javis, head coach of rival Eau Claire High. "Every year, she has given us something to talk about until the next year starts. She has exceptional speed. She's just so strong to have that bounce off the track."

Nelson has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at the University of Texas beginning 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.

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