

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Julie Mason (412-561-1014)**

**ALEXANDER CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® NORTH CAROLINA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 9, 2010) — In its 25<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Chelsea Wilkinson of Alexander Central High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade North Carolina Softball Player of the Year. Wilkinson is the first Gatorade North Carolina Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Alexander Central 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 field, distinguishes Wilkinson as North Carolina's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Wilkinson joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Alicia Hollowell (2000-01, Fairfield HS, 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.), Angela Tincher (2002-03, James River HS, Va.) and Kenzie Fowler (2006-07, Canyon del Oro HS, Ariz.).

The 5-foot-10 sophomore right-handed pitcher posted a 27-2 record with a 0.37 ERA and 349 strikeouts in 172 innings this past season, leading the Cougars (27-2) to the third round of the Class 4A playoffs. A National Fastpitch Coaches Association Second Team All-America selection, Wilkinson also batted .333 with 27 RBI. She was the Class 4A Pitcher of the Year in 2009, when she led the Cougars to a state championship.

Wilkinson has maintained a weighted 3.99 GPA in the classroom. Also a talented musician, she has volunteered locally on behalf of Christmas toy drives for needy children.

"She's very poised, very accurate and very, very difficult to hit," said Gene Poindexter, head coach of Central Davidson High, which played Alexander this season. "She has great control of three or four different pitches, and her rise ball is amazing."

Wilkinson will begin her junior 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.

Wilkinson joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Softball Players of the Year Tisha Mahon (2008-09, North Davidson), Chelsea Leonard (2007-08, Central Davidson) and Ashton Ward (2006-07, Butler) among the state's list of former award winners.

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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

###