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**MUSTANG HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® OKLAHOMA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 9, 2010) — In its 25th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Ashley Paxton of Mustang High School as its 2009-10 Gatorade Oklahoma Softball Player of the Year. Paxton is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Mustang 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 Paxton as Oklahoma's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Paxton 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-6 senior right-handed pitcher finished 21-1 with a 0.74 ERA this past season, leading the Broncos (37-4) to the Class 6A state championship game, where they eventually fell to Broken Arrow, 1-0. A 2009 Ferguson Jenkins Award recipient as named by the Oklahoma Coaches Association, Paxton recorded 203 strikeouts and issued just 21 walks in 132 innings this past fall. Also a third baseman and outfielder, she batted .294 with 32 RBI, 17 runs scored and four home runs, capturing Large West All-State honors as named by the Oklahoma Fast-Pitch Softball Coaches Association.

Paxton has maintained a 3.59 unweighted GPA in the classroom. In addition to donating her time as a peer tutor and youth softball instructor, she has volunteered on behalf of the Pets and People Humane Society.

When she's in the circle, her level of intensity, the talent that she brings and her competitiveness elevates the players," said Mustang Head Coach Tim Wade. "It's like when Mariano Rivera goes to the mound. Any time she goes to the circle, the team says, 'We're winning. It's over.' She wanted the ball. Ashley brought a high level of confidence, and the confidence in all the girls was elevated."

Paxton has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Oklahoma Christian 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.

Paxton joins recent Gatorade Oklahoma Softball Players of the Year Chelsea Lyon (2008-09, Broken Arrow), Kasha Kolb (2007-08, Chelsea) and Misty Flesher (2006-07, Lone Grove) 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.

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