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**BRIGHTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE UTAH GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 10, 2011) — In its 26th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Stephanie Verdoia of Brighton High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Utah Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Verdoia is the second Gatorade Utah Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Brighton 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 Verdoia as Utah's best high school girls soccer player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Soccer Player of the Year award to be announced in May, Verdoia joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Kevin Garnett (1992-93, Maudlin HS, S.C.), Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, East Brunswick HS, N.J.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-6 senior forward led the Bengals to a 17-0-3 record and the Class 5A state championship this past season. Verdoia scored 27 goals and passed for 12 assists, including a hat trick in a 3-0 win over top-seeded Davis High in the Class 5A state semifinals. The 2010 Class 5A MVP as named by both the Salt Lake Tribune and the Deseret News, Verdoia is a member of the U.S. Youth Soccer 1993 Region IV Olympic Development Program team. Verdoia concluded her prep soccer career with 58 goals and 38 assists.

Verdoia has maintained a 3.98 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach and at a homeless shelter and food bank in addition to donating her time as part of a fundraising campaign to benefit public television.

"Steph Verdoia is flamboyant," said Dennis Burrows, the Director of Coaching for Verdoia's Sparta United club team. "She takes it up a notch on the field. She's an athlete, a competitor, a special individual. She has that little something extra. She takes on the game and makes it hers."

Verdoia has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on scholarship at Seattle 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.

Verdoia joins recent Gatorade Utah Girls Soccer Players of the Year Jaiden Thornock (2009-10, Bonneville) and two-time winner Kealia Ohai (2008-09 & 2007-08, Alta High School) 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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