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**LAKEVILLE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MINNESOTA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 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 Rachel Banham of Lakeville North High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Banham is the first Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lakeville North 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 Banham as Minnesota'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, Banham 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-10 senior point guard has led the Panthers to a 26-2 record and a berth in the Class 4A sectional finals against Eastview High, scheduled for March 11. A 2011 Women's Basketball Coaches Association High School All-America Game selection, Banham has averaged 18.0 points, 5.4 rebounds, 4.3 assists and 2.6 steals per game while posting a 53.0 field-goal percentage. The returning Player of the Year as named by the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* and *Minnesota Basketball News*, she recorded 14.8 points per contest as a junior, leading Lakeville North to an undefeated season and the 2010 Class 4A state championship.

Also a track standout, Banham has maintained a B average in the classroom. In addition to donating her time as a youth basketball instructor and referee, she has volunteered on behalf of her church, a track club, a women's shelter and a charitable holiday gift-wrapping campaign.

"I think she's simply the best player," said Brian Cosgriff, head coach of rival Hopkins High. "I really do. She shoots the ball tremendously well from the outside, and she gets to the hole incredibly easy. She has wonderful leadership skills on the floor. She's just the complete package. She makes her team better, and she makes everyone around her better."

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

Banham joins recent Gatorade Minnesota Girls Basketball Players of the Year Sari Noga (2009-10, Parkers Prairie) and Tayler Hill (2007-08 & 2008-09, Minneapolis South) 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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