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**WEST FARGO HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® NORTH DAKOTA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 9, 2011) — In its 26th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Kacie Johnson of West Fargo High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade North Dakota Softball Player of the Year. Johnson is the first Gatorade Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from West Fargo 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 Johnson as North Dakota's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Johnson 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-7 senior pitcher and centerfielder led the Packers (25-1) to their 14th straight Class A state championship this past season. Johnson posted a 16-1 record in the circle along with a 0.48 ERA, striking out 134 batters in 102 innings. She threw four no-hitters and allowed just 40 hits. Also the 2009-10 Gatorade North Dakota Softball Player of the Year, Johnson batted .526 with seven home runs, 12 doubles, 48 runs scored and 47 RBI. A three-time All-State selection and the state's Senior Softball Player of the Year, she concluded her prep softball career with a 52-5 record and four state titles.

Johnson has maintained an unweighted 3.88 GPA in the classroom. A member of the West Fargo High Student Council, she has volunteered locally as a youth softball and hockey coach and on behalf of a literacy-outreach program.

"I have coached against Kacie Johnson for the past four years and I have never seen a more competitive person," said Mike Bisenius, head coach of rival Red River High. "She is by far one of the most dominating pitchers in the state of North Dakota. She works hard to perfect her pitching."

Johnson will attend North Dakota State 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.

Johnson is a two-time Gatorade North Dakota Softball Player of the Year and the first player to ever receive the prestigious award in her state.

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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