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**RITCHIE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® WEST VIRGINIA 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 Ashley Knight of Ritchie County High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade West Virginia Softball Player of the Year. Knight is the first Gatorade Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Ritchie County 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 Knight as West Virginia's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Knight 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-8 senior left-handed pitcher led the Rebels (27-4) to the Class AA state championship this past season. Knight posted an 18-2 record on the mound with a 0.52 ERA and 214 strikeouts against just 11 walks in 107.2 innings pitched. A First Team All-State selection in 2010, she was named to the All-State Tournament Team for the second consecutive season.

Knight has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of blood-donation and food drives, and has served as a tutor in area elementary schools.

"Knight has good stuff, but her biggest strength is placement of her pitches," said John Postlewait, head coach of East Fairmont High. "She has great control of all of her pitches and really takes control of a game."

Knight has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Pennsylvania's Slippery Rock 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.

Knight joins recent Gatorade West Virginia Softball Players of the Year Samantha Snodgrass (2009-10, St. Albans), Andi Williamson (2008-09, Chapmanville Regional) and Kiarra Chappelle (2007-08, Huntington), 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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