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**WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 21, 2011) — In its 26th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Kaci Heck of Washington High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Heck is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Washington 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 track, distinguishes Heck as South Dakota's best high school girls track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Heck joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Allyson Felix (2001-02, Los Angeles Baptist, 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.), Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.) and Bianca Knight (2006-07, Ridgeland HS, Miss.).

The 5-foot-5 junior sprinter/jumper won four individual Class AA state championships this spring and led the Warriors to a second-place finish as a team. Heck broke the tape in the 100-meter dash with a time of 12.27, the 200-meter dash in 24.86 and the 400-meter dash in 55.93. The 2010 and 2011 Class AA state meet MVP, Heck also won the long jump with a leap of 18 feet, seven and a half inches. She became just the second female athlete in state history to win four individual titles at the state track meet.

Heck has maintained a 4.03 GPA in the classroom. A devoted parishioner of her church community, she has volunteered locally as a youth camp counselor and completed a service-mission trip to Nicaragua providing medical supplies for disadvantaged families.

"Kari Heck is an extremely dedicated athlete who works very hard at all of her events," said Washington High Head Coach Everett Gebhardt. "She has a chance to become one of the most decorated track and field athletes in the history of South Dakota."

Heck will begin her senior year of high school 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.

Heck joins three-time Gatorade South Dakota Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year Jasmyne King (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08 Rapid City Central) 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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