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**WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 Desmonae Gray of Western Branch High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Virginia Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Gray is the first Gatorade Virginia Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Western Branch 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 Gray as Virginia'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, Gray 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-7 senior won the 100-meter high hurdles and the long jump at the Group AAA state meet this spring, leading the Bruins to the state championship as a team. Gray broke the tape in the 100 hurdles in 14.08 seconds, which ranked as the nation's No. 23 time among prep competitors in 2011 at the time of her selection. Gray's winning leap of 18 feet, 8 inches in the long jump ranked as the nation's No. 59 distance. She is also ranked among the nation's top 100 in the 300-meter intermediate hurdles and the triple jump.

Gray has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has volunteered locally as a teacher's aide at an elementary school.

"Desmonae Gray is a success story," said Western Branch Head Coach Claude Toukene. "She is a hard worker and the ultimate team player. She is always willing to sacrifice her individual self for the good of the team. When she started with me she was not the best, but through perseverance she is one of best athletes to ever graduate from Western Branch."

Gray has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at Florida State University beginning 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.

Gray joins recent Gatorade Virginia Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Kathleen Stevens (2009-10, Blacksburg), Marlana Wesh (2008-09, Landstown), and Natalie Baird (2007-08, Park View) 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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