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**MT. IDA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 23, 2011) — In its 26th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Andrew Irwin of Mt. Ida High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Irwin is the first Gatorade Arkansas Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Mt. Ida 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 Irwin as Arkansas' best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Irwin joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Meb Keflezighi (1993-94, San Diego HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.) and Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.).

The 6-foot-3 senior captured the Class 7A state championship in the pole vault this spring, clearing 15 feet, one inch at the state meet and also vaulting 17 feet, one inch at the Arkansas Meet of Champions. The 2009-10 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year, Irwin set a state record in the pole vault at the Lake Hamilton Tri Lakes Invitational in early March, soaring 17 feet, six and a half inches, which ranked as the nation's the No. 1 vault by a prep competitor in 2011 at the time of his selection. Only 15 high school competitors in history have cleared 17-6.5 outdoors. He finished fourth at the New Balance Outdoor Nationals with a clearance of 16-4.75. Irwin also set a U.S. national high school record indoors at 17-7 on June 5, then broke that mark with a 17-9.25 on June 14.

Irwin has maintained a 3.49 GPA in the classroom. A devoted parishioner of his church community, he is a member of his school's BETA club and has served as the treasurer of the local chapter of the Future Farmers of America.

"Andrew Irwin is an exceptional athlete who has taken pole vaulting to a new level in the state of Arkansas," said Brian Glass, head coach of rival Prescott High. "He has always acted like a winner on and off the track."

Irwin has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on a track and field scholarship at the University of Arkansas 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.

Irwin joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Caleb Cross (2008-09, Newport) and Jason Pelletier (2007-08, Bryant) 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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