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**PUNAHOU SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® HAWAII FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 1, 2011) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Steven Lakalaka of Punahou School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Hawaii Football Player of the Year. Lakalaka is the fourth Gatorade Hawaii Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Punahou 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 Lakalaka as Hawaii's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Lakalaka joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Wes Welker (1999-00, Heritage Hall HS, Okla.), Terrell Suggs (1999-00, Hamilton HS, Ariz.), Anquan Boldin (1998-99, Pahokee HS, Fla.) and Jerome Bettis (1989-90, Mackenzie HS, Mich.).

The 5-foot-10, 205-pound senior running back rushed for 1,154 yards and 12 touchdowns on 218 carries this past season, leading the Buff n' Blue (11-3) to the Division I state final. A two-time First Team All-State selection, Lakalaka collected more than 100 rushing yards in a game four times in 2011, including a season-high 162 in a win over Iolani on Sept. 9.

Lakalaka has maintained a 3.01 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered locally as a youth football and basketball coach.

"Steven Lakalaka has been a model of consistency and excellence for us," said Punahou School head coach Kale Ane. "Whenever we have needed him, he has come up big for us this season."

Lakalaka has verbally committed to play football on an athletic scholarship at UCLA beginning in the fall of 2012.

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 ESPNHS 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.

Lakalaka joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Football Players of the Year Marcus Mariota (2010-11, Saint Louis High School) Andrew Manley (2009-10, Leilehua), Manti Te'o (2008-09, 2007-08 Punahou School) 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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