

**Contact: Ashley Ginascol (312-729-3622)**

**LANSING CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® MICHIGAN FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 1, 2011) — In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Cooper Rush of Lansing Catholic High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Michigan Football Player of the Year. Rush is the first Gatorade Michigan Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Lansing Catholic 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 Rush as Michigan's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Rush 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 6-foot-3, 220-pound senior quarterback completed 242-of-357 attempts for 3,958 yards and 48 touchdowns this past season, leading the Cougars (12-1) to the Division 5 state championship game. A preseason First Team All-State selection as named by ESPNHS, Rush also ran for 766 yards and 16 touchdowns on 123 carries. In a 61-13 state quarterfinal victory against Dowagiac, he broke two state records—most touchdown passes in a half (5) and for a game (8)—and tied two others, throwing 20 straight completions and seven first-half touchdown passes.

Rush has maintained a 3.96 GPA in the classroom. In addition to donating his time as a peer tutor and serving as head of the Youth Action Committee of the Capital Region Community Foundation, he has volunteered locally on behalf of the hospital, a preschool, Catholic Charities, Hospice of Charlotte, Rotary Club of Charlotte, Eaton County Clothing and Furniture repair and Battle Creek River cleanup efforts.

"Cooper Rush is an outstanding football player," said Chris Curtiss, head coach of rival Corunna High. "I watched him as a sophomore on the varsity, and have coached against him the past two years. I can't tell you how impressed I am with his progress and improvement as a player. I have coached some very good quarterbacks and coached against All-State QBs in the past, and I can't think of one who throws the ball with the combination of velocity and accuracy like he does. The records speak for themselves, but his success comes from more than just his talent. He is a very mature young man and has handled the success very well."

Rush has verbally committed to play football on an athletic scholarship at Central Michigan University 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.

Rush joins recent Gatorade Michigan Football Players of the Year Valdez Showers (2010-11, Madison High School) Jason Fracassa (2009-10, Stevenson), Joe Glendening (2008-09, East Grand Rapids High School) and Mike Martin (2007-08, Detroit Catholic 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).