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**MATER DEI HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® CALIFORNIA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 8, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Nirra Fields of Mater Dei High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade California Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Fields is the second Gatorade California Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Mater Dei 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 court, distinguishes Fields as California's best high school girls basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Basketball Player of the Year award announced in March, Fields joins an elite alumni association of past state girls basketball award-winners, including Candace Parker (2003-04, 2002-03, & 2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Diana Taurasi (1998-99 & 1999-00, Don Antonio Lugo HS, Calif.), Maya Moore (2005-06 Collins Hill HS, Ga.), Rashanda McCants (2004-05, Asheville HS, N.C.), Shyra Ely (1999-00, Ben Davis HS, Ind.) and Lisa Leslie (1988-89, Morningside HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-10 senior guard led the Monarchs to a 30-3 record, the Southern Section Division I-AA championship and a berth in the state tournament against Burbank, scheduled for March 7. Fields averaged 22.5 points, 7.2 rebounds, 4.5 steals and 2.4 assists through 33 games. A member of Canada's U19 Women's National Team, she is both a McDonald's All-American Game and a Women's Basketball Coaches Association All-America Game selectee.

Fields has maintained a B average in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of the Down Syndrome Association of Orange County.

"Fields is a great athlete, she can shoot it from deep, and when she wants to take over, she takes over," said Matt Dale, head coach at Canyon High. "She's a great on-the-ball defender too, with great instincts."

Fields has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on an athletic scholarship at UCLA 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 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.

Fields joins recent Gatorade California Girls Basketball Players of the Year Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis (2010-11 & 2008-09, Mater Dei High School), Chelsea Gray (2009-10, St. Mary's), Jasmine Dixon (2007-08, Long Beach Poly), Jeanette Pohlen (2006 - 07, Brea Olinda), Sade Wiley-Gatewood (2003-04, Lynwood), and Noel Quinn (2002-03, Bishop Montgomery) 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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