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**HIGHLANDS RANCH HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® COLORADO GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 8, 2012) — 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 Michaela Neuhaus of Highlands Ranch High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Colorado Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Neuhaus is the fifth Gatorade Colorado Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Highlands Ranch 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 Neuhaus as Colorado'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, Neuhaus 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-7 senior point guard has led the Falcons to a 22-4 record entering the Class 5A semifinals, scheduled for March 7. Neuhaus averaged 23 points, 4.5 assists, 2.2 rebounds and 2.4 steals per game while shooting at 85 percent from the free throw line through 26 games. A 2011 First Team All-State selection, she helped Highlands Ranch to the Class 5A state title as a junior.

Neuhaus has maintained a 3.62 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, she has volunteered locally on behalf of an annual holiday toy drive and multiple fundraising campaigns to benefit cancer research.

"Michaela Neuhaus is an incredible athlete," said Highlands Ranch head coach Caryn Jarocki. "What's more impressive is that she is such a great leader and has worked hard to lead our team of younger players to new heights. It has been a joy and a pleasure coaching her."

Neuhaus has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on an athletic scholarship at the University of Denver 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.

Neuhaus joins recent Gatorade Colorado Girls Basketball Players of the Year Jamie Katuna (2010-11, Longmont High School), Quincey Noonan (2009-10, Legacy), Anna Prins (2008-09, Broomfield), Alyssa Fressle (2007-08, Highlands Ranch), Melissa Jones (2006 - 07, Legacy), Cissy Pierce (2003-04, Heritage), and Elizabeth Sherwood (2002-03, High Schoollands Ranch) 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).

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