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**HELEN COX HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® LOUISIANA 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 Kuaneshia Baker of Helen Cox High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Louisiana Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Baker is the first Gatorade Louisiana Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Helen Cox 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 Baker as Louisiana'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, Baker 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-9 senior guard averaged 25.0 points, 9.7 rebounds, 4.5 assists, 3.0 steals and 1.1 blocks per game this past season, leading the Cougars to an unofficial record of 24-7. A two-time District 8-4A Player of the Year, Baker was nominated for the McDonald's All-American Game and the WBCA All-American Game. A 2011 First Team All-State selection, she concluded her prep basketball career with a school-record 2,695 points. A state association ruling on the eligibility of a freshman reserve required Helen Cox to vacate wins in any game that player appeared, resulting in an official record of 2-29.

Baker has maintained a B average in the classroom. A member of the Cox High Student Leadership Committee and the school choir, she has volunteered locally as a camp counselor and with the Jefferson Parish Recreation Department.

"Kuaneshia Baker is a very physical guard who handles the ball extremely well and shoots the ball well off the dribble," said Kathy Luke, head coach at Vanderbilt Catholic High. "She can also shoot the 3-pointer. Her ability to create shots for her teammates is probably the one thing that sets her apart from other good guards."

Baker has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on an athletic scholarship at Louisiana State University 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.

Baker joins recent Gatorade Louisiana Girls Basketball Players of the Year Brandi Jeffery (2010-11, St. James High School), Theresa Plaisance (2009-10 & 2008-09, Vanderbilt Catholic), Kristi Bellock (2007-08, John Curtis Christian School), Adrienne Johnson (2006 - 07, Franklin), Johanna McKnight (2003-04, John Curtis Christian School), and Katie Antony (2002-03, Anacoco) 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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