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**WINNACUNNET HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® NEW HAMPSHIRE 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 Kirsten O'Neil of Winnacunnet High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade New Hampshire Girls Basketball Player of the Year. O'Neil is the third Gatorade New Hampshire Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Winnacunnet 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 O'Neil as New Hampshire'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, O'Neil 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 Warriors to a 21-1 record and a berth in the Division I state semifinals against Londonderry High, scheduled for March 7. O'Neil averaged 15.6 points, 10.2 assists, 4.0 steals, 3.0 rebounds and 0.7 blocks per game entering the state final four as Winnacunnet chases its sixth straight state title. The Warriors own a 70-1 record with the 2011 Division I Second Team All-State selection and three-year starter in the lineup.

O'Neil has maintained a 3.02 GPA in the classroom. A two-time Division I First Team All-State forward on the Winnacunnet girls soccer team, she has volunteered locally as a youth basketball and youth soccer instructor and as a peer leader for Winnacunnet High freshmen.

"Kirsten O'Neil is a smart player from the guard position," said Dan Casey, head coach at Dover High. "I have seen her have a big impact on games when she is not shooting well by distributing the ball and creating havoc with her perimeter defensive pressure. She has a great understanding of what her team needs from her in order to win games."

O'Neil has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on an athletic scholarship at San Diego 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.

O'Neil joins recent Gatorade New Hampshire Girls Basketball Players of the Year Danielle Walczak (2010-11, Oyster River High School), Tiffany Ruffin (2009-10, 2008-09, & 2007-08, Winnacunnet), Stefanie Murphy (2006 - 07, Londonderry), Laura Aloisi (2003-04, Nashua), and Lauren Moore (2002-03, Alvire) 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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