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**ELDORADO HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® NEW MEXICO 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 Gina Okoye of Eldorado High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Okoye is the fifth Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Eldorado 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 Okoye as New Mexico'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, Okoye 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-8 senior forward led the Eagles to a 24-1 record and a berth in the Class 5A state quarterfinals against Cleveland, scheduled for March 6. Okoye averaged 19.0 points, 8.8 rebounds and 6.0 steals through 25 games. She is a First Team All-District selection and has twice been named Metro Defensive Player of the Year.

Okoye has maintained a 3.77 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of Habitat for Humanity and an area food bank.

"Okoye is a complete player who really leads her team on both sides of the ball," said Joe Carpenter, head coach at Roswell High. "She's a mismatch, because she can play post or guard, but defense comes first for her. She can shut down the other team's best player, at any position."

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

Okoye joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Girls Basketball Players of the Year Justina Prairie Chief (2010-11, Gallup High School), Kya DeGarmo (2009-10, Eldorado), Megan Muniz (2008-09, Rio Rancho), Brenna Freeze (2007-08, La Cueva), Madison Spence (2006 - 07, Mayfield), Brio Rode (2003-04, Rio Rancho), and Shauna Snyder (2002-03, Cibola) 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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