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**TWINSBURG HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® OHIO 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 Malina Howard of Twinsburg High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Ohio Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Howard is the first Gatorade Ohio Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Twinsburg 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 Howard as Ohio'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, Howard 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 6-foot-4 senior forward led the Tigers to a 21-3 record and a berth in the Division I regional tournament, scheduled for March 6. Johnson averaged 17.5 points, 10.2 rebounds, 2.2 steals and 1.7 assists through 24 games. A McDonald's High School All-American Game selection and a Women's Basketball Coaches Association All-America Game invitee, Howard is ranked the nation's No. 7 recruit by the Hoopgurlz ESPNU 100.

Howard has maintained a 4.29 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society and the Foreign Language Honors Club, she has served as the secretary on her school's student council and has volunteered locally at an area nursing home and as a youth basketball coach.

"Malina Howard is all that she is hyped up to be," said Rob Matula, head coach at Mason High. "She has hands as soft as any great wide receiver and she can shoot from all ranges. What makes her more impressive is her demeanor. She stays collected at all times even while being double- and triple-teamed."

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

Howard joins recent Gatorade Ohio Girls Basketball Players of the Year Ally Malott (2010-11, Madison High School), Amy Scullion (2009-10, Salem), Mikaela Ruef (2008-09, Beavercreek), Shay Selby (2007-08, Regina), Jantel Lavender (2006 - 07, Cleveland Central Catholic), Marscilla Parker (2003-04, Pickerington North), and Brittany Hunter (2002-03, Brookhaven) 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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