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**HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® VERMONT 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 Sarah Illingworth of Hartford High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Vermont Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Illingworth is the first Gatorade Vermont Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Hartford 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 Illingworth as Vermont'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, Illingworth 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-1 senior center led the Hurricanes to a 15-5 record and a berth in the Division 2 playoffs against Otter Valley, scheduled for March 7. Illingworth averaged 12.8 points, 10.3 rebounds and 1.4 steals per game entering the postseason. She is a First Team All-Marble Valley honoree and a member of the Vermont Basketball Coaches Association Dream Dozen.

Illingworth has maintained a 4.02 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade Award's broad criteria. She has volunteered locally on behalf of a community food shelf for the needy and youth basketball programs.

"Illingworth works really hard and she's tough on the inside," said Terry Merrow, head coach at Burr and Burton Academy. "She rebounds well, scores in the low post and can hit that little elbow shot too. She's a real student of the game."

Illingworth has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on an athletic scholarship at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell 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.

Illingworth joins recent Gatorade Vermont Girls Basketball Players of the Year Kylie Atwood (2010-11, Lake Region Union High School), Allison Gannon (2009-10, Champlain Valley Union), Tiffany Johnson (2008-09, Bellows Free Academy), Alyssa Herrington (2007-08, Mt. Anthony Union), Kelli Hier (2006-07, Rice Memorial), Corey Rusin (2003-04, Wilmington), and Dani Rayner (2002-03, Bellows Falls Union) 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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