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Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)

**CARVER HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® ALABAMA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 22, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Craig Sword of Carver High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Alabama Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Sword is the first Gatorade Alabama Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Carver 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 Sword as Alabama's best high school boys basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced in March, Sword joins an elite alumni association of past state boys basketball award winners, including Dwight Howard (2003-04, SW Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.), Chauncey Billups (1993-94 & 1994-95, George Washington HS, Colo.), Jason Kidd (1991-92, St. Joseph Notre Dame HS, Calif.), Paul Pierce (1994-95, Inglewood HS, Calif.) and Chris Bosh (2001-02, Lincoln HS, Texas).

The 6-foot-3, 183-pound senior guard led the Wolverines to a 29-3 record and the Class 6A state championship this past season. Sword amassed 33 points, 11 rebounds, three assists and two steals in a 61-56, title-clinching victory against Hazel Green High, capturing tournament Most Valuable Player honors. A two-time returning First Team All-State selection as named by the Alabama Sports Writers Association, Sword averaged 17 points, nine rebounds, seven assists, five steals and four blocks per game. He shot 65 percent from the field, 52 percent from 3-point range and 80 percent from the free throw line.

Sword has maintained a 3.08 GPA in the classroom. In addition to serving as a youth basketball instructor, he has volunteered locally at his church, multiple retirement facilities and field days for both elementary and middle school children. Sword has also donated his time on behalf of the Boys & Girls Club of America and as part of the National Education Association's Read Across America campaign.

"Craig Sword has been an outstanding player and individual in the four years we have competed against him," said Floyd Mathews, head coach at Lanier High. "He played the two for Carver, but he was more of a one. He can do a lot of things. He has improved on his outside game, so you must respect all parts of his game. He led his team to a state title, and he absolutely took over in the championship game."

Sword has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at Mississippi 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.

Sword joins recent Gatorade Alabama Boys Basketball Players of the Year Levi Randolph (2010-11, Bob Jones High School), KT Harrell (2009-10, Brewbaker Technology Magnet), Jordan Swing (2008-09, Vestavia Hills High School), JaMychal Green (2007-08, St. Jude Educational Institute), and Justin Knox (2006-07, Tuscaloosa Central) 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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