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**Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)**

**PUNAHOU SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® HAWAII BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 22, 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 DeForest Buckner of Punahou School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Hawaii Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Buckner is the second Gatorade Hawaii Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Punahou 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 Buckner as Hawaii'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, Buckner 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-8, 250-pound senior led the Buff N' Blue to a 28-2 record and the Division I state championship this past season. Buckner recorded 10 points, 10 rebounds and two blocks in a 59-52, title-clinching victory against Kahuku High, capturing tournament co-Most Valuable Player honors along with teammate Malik Johnson. A two-time returning All-State Fab 15 selection as named by the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Buckner averaged 12.8 points, 10.1 rebounds, 2.7 blocks, 1.6 steals and 1.3 assists per game. He shot 67 percent from the field and 59 percent from the free throw line.

Also a football standout, Buckner has maintained a B average in the classroom. In addition to donating his time as a youth basketball and football instructor, he has volunteered on behalf of the Special Olympics.

"On the court, he's as imposing a player as I've ever seen in Hawaii, and I've been a part of the game here since 1992 and loved and followed basketball here long before that," said Kawika Smith, head coach at Damien High. "His Herculean frame is only outdone by his amazing athleticism. And as natural as both of those attributes are, they would be worthless without the relentless hard work that he puts in day after day."

Buckner has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on scholarship at the University of Oregon 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.

Buckner joins recent Gatorade Hawaii Boys Basketball Players of the Year Micah Christenson (2009-10 & 2010-11, Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama High School), Pi'i Minns (2008-09, Kamehameha Schools-Kapalama High School), Kameron Steinhoff (2007-08, Punahou School), and Spencer McLachlin (2006-07, Punahou School) 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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