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Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)

**RIVERSIDE ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® LOUISIANA 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 Ricardo Gathers of Riverside Academy as its 2011-12 Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Gathers is the first Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Riverside Academy.

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 Gathers as Louisiana'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, Gathers 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 state's returning Gatorade Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Gathers averaged 20.2 points, 17.0 rebounds, 4.1 blocks, 2.1 assists and 1.1 steals per game this past season, leading the Rebels (33-10) to the Class 2A state championship game. The 6-foot-8, 240-pound senior forward averaged 20.7 points, 16.2 rebounds and 3.9 blocks as a junior and 19.8 points, 11.5 rebounds and 4.5 blocks as a sophomore, leading Riverside Academy to the Class 2A state championship and capturing tournament Most Outstanding Player honors in both seasons. Also the state's returning Mr. Basketball selection as named by the Louisiana Sports Writers Association, Gathers participated in the National Basketball Players Association Top 100 Camp and LeBron James Skills Academy this past summer.

Gathers has maintained a 3.10 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of his church as a referee for a youth basketball league.

"Ricardo is such a freak talent because he has an NBA motor," said Riverside Academy Head Coach Timmy Byrd. "There's nobody even close to him in the state of Louisiana and not a whole lot of guys close to him in the whole country. He can do a lot of different things, and that's what makes him so unique. We're going to miss him, because he fills the stat sheet, but on top of that, he plays so hard and makes his other teammates play hard."

Gathers has verbally committed to play basketball on an athletic scholarship at Baylor 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.

Two-time winner Gathers joins Gatorade Louisiana Boys Basketball Players of the Year Matt Derenbecker (2008-09 & 2009-10, Metairie Park Country Day School), and Greg Monroe (2006-07 & 2007-08, Helen Cox High 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.

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