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**KEMPER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® MISSISSIPPI 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 Devonta Pollard of Kemper County High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Mississippi Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Pollard is the first Gatorade Mississippi Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Kemper County 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 Pollard as Mississippi'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, Pollard 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-7 senior forward led the Wildcats to a 28-8 record and the Class 3A state championship this past season. Pollard averaged 23.8 points, 15.7 rebounds and 5.1 blocks per game, and notched a triple-double in the state championship game win over Booneville. A two-time member of the Clarion-Ledger Dandy Dozen, he has been selected to play in the McDonald's All-American game.

Pollard has maintained a B-plus average in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has served on the student council and helped coordinate the "Hooping for Jesus" fundraiser, which benefitted local youth groups.

"Pollard is great in the open floor, an excellent finisher and he has a very efficient pull-up jump shot. He loves to attack the basket," said Paul Biancardi, National Director, ESPN Basketball Recruiting. "Defensively, he has an uncanny ability to block shots with his timing and quickness off the floor."

Pollard remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Pollard joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Boys Basketball Players of the Year Rodney Hood (2010-11, Meridian High School), Jake Stringer (2009-10, Forest Hill), Andre Stringer (2008-09, Forest Hill High School), Scottie Haralson (2007-08, Provine High School), and Ravern Johnson (2006-07, Coahoma County) 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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