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

**SOUTH SIOUX CITY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® NEBRASKA 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 Mike Gesell of South Sioux City High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Nebraska Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Gesell is the first Gatorade Nebraska Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from South Sioux City 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 Gesell as Nebraska'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, Gesell 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-2, 185-pound senior point guard averaged 24.8 points, 7.4 assists, 5.0 rebounds and 2.9 steals per game this past season, leading the Cardinals (19-7) to the Class B state championship game. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Gesell shot 52.7 percent from the field, 38.4 percent from 3-point range and 82.9 percent from the free throw line. Also the returning captain of the Lincoln Journal Star and Omaha World-Herald All-State teams, he averaged 19.9 points, 7.7 rebounds, 6.4 assists and 3.3 steals as a sophomore as well as 25.2 points, 8.2 assists, 5.5 rebounds and 2.9 steals per game as a junior, leading South Sioux City to consecutive state titles in 2010 and 2011.

Gesell has maintained a 4.00 unweighted GPA and ranks No. 1 in his graduating class. In addition to donating his time as a youth basketball instructor and referee, he has volunteered on behalf of his church's youth group, a holiday gift-giving campaign, the National Honor Society and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

"He's a great player and a very competitive young man," said Luke Olson, head coach at Bennington High. "He always handles himself with class, on and off the floor. He's the best player in the state."

Gesell has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Iowa 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 Gesell joins Gatorade Nebraska Boys Basketball Players of the Year Elliott Eliason (2008-09 & 2009-10, Chadron), and Wes Eikmeier (2006-07 & 2007-08, Archbishop Bergan Catholic 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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