

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

**ELDORADO HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® NEW MEXICO 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 Cullen Neal of Eldorado High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade New Mexico Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Neal is the second Gatorade New Mexico Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Eldorado 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 Neal as New Mexico'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, Neal 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-4, 170-pound junior guard led the Eagles to a 22-8 record and the Class 5A state title this past season. Neal averaged 27.7 points, five rebounds, 4.5 assists and 1.1 steals per game. A two-time Class 5A All-Tournament team selection, he scored 34 points on 12-for-21 shooting in A state final victory over La Cueva.

Neal has maintained a 3.97 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society, he has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

"The best thing about Cullen Neal is how much he loves playing the game," said Eldorado head coach Roy Sanchez. "He's always laughing and smiling on the court and he's really become a great leader. This year he really helped everyone around him play better. Everyone talks about his scoring but he spreads the ball around and plays great defense. Once he did that, everything fell into place."

Neal will begin his senior year of high school 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.

Neal joins recent Gatorade New Mexico Boys Basketball Players of the Year Chris Strong (2010-11, Eldorado High School), Alex Kirk (2009-10, Los Alamos), Lucio Luttrell (2008-09, Las Cruces High School), Jeff Taylor (2007-08, Hobbs High School), and Aaron 'Gordo' Castillo (2006-07, Las Cruces) 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).

###