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**MARCUS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® TEXAS 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 Marcus Smart of Marcus High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Texas Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Smart is the first Gatorade Texas Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Marcus 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 Smart as Texas' 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, Smart 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, 215-pound senior guard and forward led the Marauders to a 39-2 record and a second-straight Class 5A state championship this past season. The returning Gatorade Texas Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Smart averaged 15.1 points, 9.2 rebounds, 5.0 assists, 2.8 steals and 1.3 blocks per game, and he took 43 charges. A McDonald's All-American Game selection, he was the 2011 Texas Association of Basketball Coaches Class 5A Player of the Year.

Smart has maintained a B average in the classroom. A member of the Black History Club, he has volunteered locally as an elementary school mentor and tutor and as a youth basketball coach.

"Marcus Smart is a leader on and off the court and has one of the best attitudes I've ever seen in a high school player," said Henry Thomas, head coach at Flower Mound High. "What makes him so good to me is the fact that he seems to always be involved in every play, offensive or defensive. He seems to always be around the ball."

Smart has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on an athletic scholarship at Oklahoma State University beginning 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 Smart joins Gatorade Texas Boys Basketball Players of the Year Joseph Young (2009-10, Yates), Tommy Mason-Griffin (2008-09, Madison High School), Willie Warren (2007-08, North Crowley High School), and Gary Johnson (2006-07, Aldine) 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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