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**WALTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE GEORGIA BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 15, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Holden Fender of Walton High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Georgia Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Fender is the second Gatorade Georgia Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Walton 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 field, distinguishes Fender as Georgia's best high school boys soccer player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Soccer Player of the Year award to be announced in May, Fender joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, East Brunswick HS, N.J.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 6-foot-1, 175-pound senior midfielder scored 10 goals and passed for 13 assists this past season, leading the Raiders (12-6-1) to the Class AAAAA state quarterfinals. A member of the U.S. Soccer Under-17 Men's National Team and a 2011 Youth All-American selection by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, Fender was a Class AAA First Team All-State honoree as a junior. He concluded his prep soccer career with 22 goals and 32 assists.

Fender has maintained a 3.56 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally with the US Youth Soccer TOPSoccer program serving young athletes with disabilities in addition to donating his time as a youth coach and mentor.

"Holden has a couple of strengths that set him apart from the rest," said Gregg Blasingame, the director of coaching for the Concorde Fire club program. "He totally controls the tempo of the game. He knows when to slow it down or pick up the pace. He reads the game very well and can switch the play better than any midfielder I've seen."

Fender has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on an athletic scholarship at UCLA 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.

Fender joins recent Gatorade Georgia Boys Soccer Players of the Year John "Snoopy" Davidson (2010-11, Rome High School), Jordan McCrary, (2009-10, Lassiter), Chris Thomas (2008-09, Greater Atlanta Christian School), Connor Barbaree (2007-08, Walton), and Jimmy Maurer (2006-2007, St. Pius X Catholic) 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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