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**CONANT HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 23, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Courtney Raetzman of Conant High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Illinois Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Raetzman is the first Gatorade Illinois Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Conant 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 Raetzman as Illinois' best high school girls soccer player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Soccer Player of the Year award to be announced in May, Raetzman 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 5-foot-3 senior forward led the Cougars to an 18-3 record entering the Class 3A Schaumburg Sectional semifinals, scheduled for May 23. Raetzman scored 28 goals and passed for six assists through 21 games, including nine multi-goal performances. A member of the U.S. Soccer Under-18 Women's National Team and a 2011 Youth All-American selection for club play by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, Raetzman is a three-time First Team All-State honoree. Entering the sectional semifinals, she had recorded 71 goals and 29 assists in her prep soccer career.

Raetzman has maintained a 3.54 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally as part of fundraising campaigns to benefit cancer and multiple sclerosis research and as part of multiple community service initiatives in association with the National Honor Society.

"Courtney is a very gifted player," said Sebastian Falinski, head coach of rival Dundee-Crown High. "Far more impressive about her is that she looks to make her teammates better. She understands that winning is a team effort. Also, she may be little but she plays with a big heart."

Raetzman has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on an athletic scholarship at the University of Kentucky 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.

Raetzman joins recent Gatorade Illinois Girls Soccer Players of the Year Megan Oyster (2010 - 11, Neuqua Valley High School), Vanessa DiBernardo, (2009-10, Waubonsie Valley), Rachel Quon (2008-09 Lake Forest), Bri Rodriguez (2007-08, Waubonsie Valley), and Tessa Gavilsky (2006-07, Granite City) 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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