

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ashley Ginascol (312-729-3622)

**APPLING COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® GEORGIA BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 30, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Byron Buxton of Appling County High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Georgia Baseball Player of the Year. Buxton is the first Gatorade Georgia Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Appling County 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 Buxton as Georgia's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award announced in May, Buxton joins an elite alumni association of past state baseball award winners, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Roy Halladay (1994-95, Arvada West HS, Colo.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman HS, Tenn.), Chipper Jones (1989-90, Bolles School, Fla.), Derek Lee (1992-93, El Camino HS, Calif.) and John Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Prep, Wash.).

The 6-foot-1, 175-pound senior outfielder and right-handed pitcher led the Pirates (33-2) to a berth in the Class AA state final against Pierce County, scheduled for May 29. At the time of his selection, Buxton owned a 9-0 record on the mound with five saves, a 1.78 ERA and 125 strikeouts in 67 innings. The No. 2 ranked prospect in the Class of 2012 as rated by ESPNHS and Baseball America, he also batted .523 with three home runs, 31 RBIs and 36 stolen bases through 35 games.

Buxton has maintained an 85.2 average in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered locally as a youth baseball coach.

"Byron Buxton is the biggest game-changing player that I have seen in Georgia since (Kansas City Royals outfielder) Jeff Francoeur," said Josh Cole, head coach at Tatnall County High. "Not only is he a five-tool player, but he is also so exceptional in all of those areas there is no real comparison in high school baseball."

Buxton has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on an athletic scholarship at the University of Georgia this fall, but is projected as an early round selection in next month's Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft.

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.

Buxton joins recent Gatorade Georgia Baseball Players of the Year Matt Olson (2010-11, Parkview High School), Kaleb Cowart (2009-10, Cook), Zach Wheeler (2008-09, East Paulding), Ethan Martin (2007-08, Stephens County), and Josh Smoker (2006-07, Calhoun), 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.

###