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**PETAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MISSISSIPPI 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 Anthony Alford of Petal High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Mississippi Baseball Player of the Year. Alford is the fourth Gatorade Mississippi Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Petal 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 Alford as Mississippi's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award announced in May, Alford 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, 215-pound senior outfielder batted .483 with four home runs, 31 RBIs and 39 runs-scored this past season, leading the Panthers (23-7) to the Class 6A quarterfinals. The 2010-11 and 2011-12 Gatorade Mississippi Football Player of the Year, Alford is the No. 48 ranked baseball prospect in the Class of 2012 as rated by ESPNHS. He posted an .805 slugging percentage and 14 stolen bases in 2012.

Alford has maintained a B average in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered locally on behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and as a youth baseball and football coach.

"Anthony Alford is an exceptional player," said Larry Knight, head coach at Sumrall High. "He's absolutely a special talent and he's just on a level above all the others I've seen."

Alford has signed a National Letter of Intent to play football on an athletic scholarship at the University of Southern Mississippi 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.

Alford joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Baseball Players of the Year Mason Robbins (2010-11, George County High School), Brayden Jones (2009-10, Madison Central), Darren Farmer (2008-09; West Lauderdale), Rashun Dixon (2007-08, Terry), and Paxton Pace (2006-07, West Lauderdale), 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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