

Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)

**NORTHERN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MARYLAND SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 6, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Jess Cummings of Northern High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Maryland Softball Player of the Year. Cummings is the second Gatorade Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Northern 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 Cummings as Maryland's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Cummings joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Alicia Hollowell (2000-01, Fairfield HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Angela Tincher (2002-03, James River HS, Va.) and Kenzie Fowler (2006-07, Canyon del Oro HS, Ariz.).

The 5-foot-8 sophomore pitcher led the Patriots (25-0) to their fifth straight Class 3A state championship this past season. Cummings posted a 20-0 record with a 0.38 ERA and 260 strikeouts in 128 innings-pitched. She threw six no-hitters, including three perfect games, and held opponents to a .090 batting average. In 35 postseason innings, she allowed two earned runs on 13 hits with 57 strikeouts, including a four-hitter with 15 strikeouts in the state final.

Cummings has maintained an A average in the classroom. A member of the Northern High Key Club, she has volunteered with Christmas in April, which benefits needy senior citizens, and as a youth softball coach.

"Without a pitcher like Jess Cummings, Northern would not have held stronger hitting teams from scoring," said Andrea Poffinberger, head coach of Linganore High, which lost to Northern in the state final. "She has great control of her pitches for a sophomore."

Cummings will begin her junior year of high school 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.

Cummings joins recent Gatorade Maryland Softball Players of the Year Kaitlyn Schmeiser (2010-11, Northern High School), Kourtney Salvarola (2009-10, Broadneck), Melanie Mitchell (2008-09, McDonough) and Lauren Gibson (2007-08, Chesapeake) 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.

###