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**MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® MASSACHUSETTS SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 6, 2012) — In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Shannon Smith of Milford High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Player of the Year. Smith is the first Gatorade Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Milford 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 Smith as Massachusetts's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Smith 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 junior right-handed pitcher led the Scarlet Hawks to a 20-0 record entering the Division I Central Division quarterfinals, scheduled for June 4. The state's returning Gatorade Softball Player of the Year, Smith owned a 19-0 record with a 0.11 ERA and 286 strikeouts against just 19 walks in 130 innings-pitched through 20 games. Also a first baseman, Smith batted .460 with seven home runs and 33 RBI, producing a .905 slugging percentage and .579 on-base percentage.

Smith has maintained a 3.60 GPA in the classroom and serves as her school's junior class secretary. In addition to donating her time as a youth softball instructor, she has volunteered on behalf of her church's youth group and the Special Olympics.

"Shannon has a competitive drive that is unmatched," said Milford head coach Brian Macchi. "She loves the game and knows the game. She eats, breathes and sleeps softball. She wants to be the one that has the ball in her hand or be at the plate when the game is on the line. Shannon possesses a self-confidence that truly separates her from other student-athletes."

Smith will begin her senior year of high school this fall and has verbally committed to play softball on scholarship at the University of Kentucky beginning in the fall of 2013.

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.

Two-time winner Smith joins recent Gatorade Massachusetts Softball Players of the Year Emma Mendoker (2010-11, Amherst Regional High School), and Nicole D'Argento (2007-08 & 2008-09, Ashland) 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).