

**Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)**

**LADYWOOD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® MICHIGAN 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 Briana Combs of Ladywood High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Michigan Softball Player of the Year. Combs is the first Gatorade Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Ladywood 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 Combs as Michigan's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Combs 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 senior pitcher led the Blazers (33-3) entering Division 2, Region 15 tournament semifinals, scheduled for June 9. Combs owned a 33-1 record with a 0.09 ERA and 364 strikeouts in 225 innings-pitched through 36 games. She recorded eight no-hitters, including three perfect games, and held opponents to a .046 batting average. At the plate, Combs batted .536 with 17 doubles, 43 runs scored, 35 RBI and a .818 slugging percentage entering the regional final four.

Combs has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally at a homeless shelter and food bank. She has also donated her time fundraising to benefit the American Cancer Society.

"Briana Combs is a fierce competitor," said Newton Barefoot, president emeritus of the Compuware ASA team. "She has taken the game to the next level on so many occasions with her mental toughness. She has the ability to spot the ball over the desired portion of the plate like no other pitcher I've known."

Combs has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Cleveland State University 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.

Combs joins recent Gatorade Michigan Softball Players of the Year Sara Driesenga (2008-09, 2009-10 & 2010-11, Hudsonville High School), and Jenna Ignowski (2007-08, Niles) 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).

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