

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)

**MADISON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MISSISSIPPI 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 Kelly Young of Madison Central High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Mississippi Softball Player of the Year. Young is the second Gatorade Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Madison Central 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 Young as Mississippi's best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Young 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-10 senior right-handed pitcher led the Jaguars to a 29-3 record and a third consecutive Class 6A state championship this season. A returning Class 6A First Team All-State selection as named by The Clarion-Ledger, Young posted a 25-2 record with a 0.29 ERA and 338 strikeouts against 40 walks in 168 innings-pitched. Also a shortstop, she batted .305 with three home runs and 19 RBI, producing a .463 slugging percentage and .377 on-base percentage. In eight Class 6A state tournament games, she finished 8-0 in the circle with a 0.25 ERA and 91 strikeouts in 56 innings-pitched.

Young has maintained a 4.00 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Beta Club and Mu Alpha Theta mathematics honor society, she has volunteered locally as a peer tutor and on behalf of MAADCAP to benefit the needy. Young has also donated her time in association with Madison Central's softball squad as an instructor for youth players and as part of fundraising efforts to benefit the needy in Rwanda.

"First, I'm glad she's graduating," said Mike Armstrong, head coach at rival Northwest Rankin High. "She's one of the humblest athletes you're ever going to see. She's just a great kid. It's never about herself. She's a very good pitcher. We have good batters, and we tried to outthink her, but she was smarter than we were. In 2009, when we won the state championship, she beat us as a ninth-grader. She was that good at that age and definitely improved every year. She batted very well this year, too."

Young has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at the University of Arkansas 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.

Young joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Softball Players of the Year Emily Davis (2010-11, Newton County High School), Londen Ladner (2008-09 & 2009-10, Northwest Rankin), and Whitney Kiihnl (2007-08, South Panola) 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.

###