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**HEBRON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® TEXAS 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 Heather Stearns of Hebron High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Texas Softball Player of the Year. Stearns is the first Gatorade Softball Player of the Year to be chosen from Hebron 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 Stearns as Texas' best high school softball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Softball Player of the Year award announced in June, Stearns 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 pitcher and first baseman posted an 18-9 record on the mound and a 1.29 ERA, leading the Hawks (28-11-1) to the Class 5A, Region 1 final this past season. Stearns struck out 313 batters and walked 40 in 190 innings-pitched. At the plate, she batted .415 with 15 home runs, 41 RBI and a .972 slugging percentage. She hit four home runs in a 13-4 win over Pilot Point High on March 3, becoming the first softball player from Texas to hit more than three homers in a game.

Stearns has maintained a 3.21 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally at a homeless shelter and food bank and has taught Sunday School at her church.

"Heather has not only great velocity, but she has great movement and a great selection of pitches," said Michelle Mayfield, head coach of rival Mansfield Legacy High. "Heather was also huge in the playoffs for Hebron, definitely turning up her intensity and game several notches."

Stearns has signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball on scholarship at Baylor 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.

Stearns joins recent Gatorade Texas Softball Players of the Year Paige McDuffee (2010-11, The Woodlands High School), Rachel Fox (2008-09 & 2009-10, Fort Bend Baptist Academy), and Whitney Canion (2007-08, Aledo) 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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