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**NORTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE KANSAS BOYS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (February 22, 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 Austin Clifton of Northwest High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Kansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Clifton is the fourth Gatorade Kansas Boys Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Northwest 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 Clifton as Kansas' best high school boys soccer player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Soccer Player of the Year award to be announced in May, Clifton joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, East Brunswick HS, N.J.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-11, 160-pound senior forward led the Grizzlies to a 21-0 record and the Class 6A state championship this past season. Clifton scored 28 goals and passed for eight assists, including a hat trick in a 3-1 win over Blue Valley Northwest High in the state semifinals. An All-American selection by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, Clifton is a two-time First Team All-State honoree. Clifton, who transferred to Northwest from Wichita South High after his sophomore year, concluded his two seasons as a Grizzly with 51 goals and 18 assists.

Clifton has maintained a 3.55 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally with the Meals on Wheels Association of America, the Northwest Booster Club and as a mentor and coach for special-needs children.

"Austin went to high school and played up front and he's been banging goals in the last two years," said Sammy Lane, Clifton's club coach with Evolution FC. "Once he got the confidence of scoring goals in high school, it changed his belief that he could be a good player. He really flourished into being the best player around here."

Clifton has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on an athletic scholarship at Fort Hays 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.

Clifton joins recent Gatorade Kansas Boys Soccer Players of the Year Nick Besler (2010 - 11, Blue Valley West High School), Jon Kempin, (2009-10, Blue Valley North High School), Ethan Bauer (2008-09 Olathe South) and Coleton Henning (2007-08, 2006-07, Saint Thomas Aquinas) 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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