

Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)

**HAZELWOOD EAST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 20, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Tianna Valentine of Hazelwood East High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Missouri Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Valentine is the first Gatorade Missouri Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Hazelwood East 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 track, distinguishes Valentine as Missouri's best high school girls track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Valentine joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Allyson Felix (2001-02, Los Angeles Baptist, 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.), Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.) and Bianca Knight (2006-07, Ridgeland HS, Miss.).

The 5-foot-2 senior sprinter won the 100-meter dash with a time of 11:51 seconds and the 200-meter dash in 23.71 at the Class 4 state meet this spring. The 2012 St. Louis Post-Dispatch All-Metro Girls Track Athlete of the Year, Valentine set a meet record in the 100 at the Kansas Relays, winning with a time of 11.66 seconds. Her effort in the 100 at the state meet ranked as the nation's No. 27 time by a prep competitor at the time of her selection.

Valentine has maintained a 3.1 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of her church community, she has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple charity fund-raising initiatives and as a youth track and field coach.

"Tianna Valentine was the ultimate leader on my team," said Hazelwood East head coach Linwood Barnes. "She was so hard-working at practice and it showed when she had to compete. Athletes like her don't come around her often. She has a very bright future and I truly believe she will be in the 2016 Olympics."

Valentine has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on an athletic scholarship at the University of Kansas 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.

Valentine joins recent Gatorade Missouri Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Colleen Quigley (2010-11, Nerinx Hall), Tiffani McReynolds (2009-10, The Pembroke Hill School), Emily Sisson (2008-09, Parkway Central), and Alishea Usery (2007-08, McCluer South-Berkeley) 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.

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