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**MILLARD SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 Clara Nichols of Millard South High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Nebraska Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Nichols is the first Gatorade Nebraska Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Millard South 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 Nichols as Nebraska'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, Nichols 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-7 senior sprinter won the 100-meter dash with a time of 11.96 seconds, the 200-meter dash in 24.66 and the 400-meter dash in 55.29 at the Class A state meet this spring. A 2012 First Team All-State selection, Nichols was the fastest Nebraska competitor and earned second place in the 400 with a time of 56.07 at the Kansas Relays. Her 400 clocking at the state meet ranked as the nation's No. 66 time by a prep competitor at the time of her selection.

Nichols has maintained a 3.82 GPA in the classroom. An active member of the French, Math and Science Clubs, she is a staff writer for her school newspaper and has volunteered locally on behalf of an anti-bullying program and as a youth track and field coach.

"In my seven years of coaching track and field in Nebraska, Clara Nichols is easily one of the top five athletes I have seen come through the state," said Danny Gray, head coach at Burke High. "Her ability to compete at such a high level at so many different distances is truly remarkable."

Nichols has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on an athletic scholarship at Oklahoma 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.

Nichols joins recent Gatorade Nebraska Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Aubree Worden (2009-10 & 2010-11, Scottsbluff High School), Kelli Budd (2008-09, Marian), and Emily Sisson (2007-08, Millard North) 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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