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**BALLARD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 21, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Ronnie Baker of Ballard High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Kentucky Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Baker is the first Gatorade Kentucky Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Ballard 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 Baker as Kentucky's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Baker joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Meb Keflezighi (1993-94, San Diego HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.) and Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.).

The returning Gatorade Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year, the 5-foot-10, 160-pound senior sprinter won the 100-meter dash and the 400-meter dash at the Class 3A state meet this spring and led the Bruins to third place as a team. Baker won the 100 with a time of 10.65 seconds and the 400 in 47.18, the latter of which ranked as the No. 24 performance in the nation by prep competitors in 2012 at the time of his selection. The 2012 Class AAA Track Athlete of the Year, he is one of just two boys in the country ranked among the national top 50 in the 100, 200 and 400.

Baker has maintained a 3.54 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Ballard High Beta Club, he has volunteered locally at an area homeless shelter and food bank, as a peer tutor and as part of a fundraising campaign to benefit the March of Dimes.

"Ronnie Baker has dominated Kentucky track over the last few years," said Chris Hawboldt, head coach of Tates Creek High. "He is an outstanding sprinter."

Baker has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at Texas Christian University beginning 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.

Two-time winner Baker joins recent Gatorade Kentucky Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Brandon Bagley (2009-10, John Hardin), Cameron Frazier (2008-09, Daviess County), and Justin Green (2007-08, Louisville Male) 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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