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**PAPILLION-LA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 Kenzo Cotton of Papillion-La Vista High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Nebraska Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Cotton is the first Gatorade Nebraska Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Papillion-La Vista 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 Cotton as Nebraska'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, Cotton 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 6-foot-2, 190-pound sophomore sprinter won the 200-meter dash in a state-record time of 21.30 seconds and captured the 100-meter dash in 10.40 at the Class A state meet this spring, leading the Monarchs to a second-place finish as a team. A 2012 First Team All-State selection, Cotton completed an undefeated season in both the 100 and the 200 in 2012.

Cotton has maintained a 3.72 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered locally on behalf of the Health Occupations Students of America, an area homeless shelter and as a youth camp counselor.

"Kenzo Cotton is a breath of fresh air in the sport of track and field in Nebraska," said Bob White, head coach at Lincoln High. "As a high school sophomore, he is already competing at the level of some of the best athletes in the United States. I believe he will continue to excite Nebraska track fans for the next two years and beyond."

Cotton will begin his junior year of high school 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.

Cotton joins recent Gatorade Nebraska Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Ted Lampkin (2009-10 & 2010-11, Omaha Central High School), Mitchell Hunt (2008-09, Fremont), and Brett Maher (2007-08, Kearney) 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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