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**Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)**

**GLENBARD NORTH HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® ILLINOIS FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (November 29, 2012) — In its 28<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Justin Jackson of Glenbard North High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Illinois Football Player of the Year. Jackson is the first Gatorade Illinois Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Glenbard North 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 Jackson as Illinois's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Jackson joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Wes Welker (1999-00, Heritage Hall HS, Okla.), Terrell Suggs (1999-00, Hamilton HS, Ariz.), Anquan Boldin (1998-99, Pahokee HS, Fla.) and Jerome Bettis (1989-90, Mackenzie HS, Mich.).

The 6-foot, 175-pound junior running back rushed for 2,612 yards and 35 touchdowns on 421 carries this season, leading the Panthers (12-2) to the Class 8A state championship game. A Class 8A First Team All-State selection as named by the Illinois Football Coaches Association, Jackson also hauled in 19 catches for 284 yards and two touchdowns. In five Class 8A state playoff games, he totaled 901 yards and 13 touchdowns on 166 carries.

Jackson has maintained a 5.00 weighted GPA on a 5.0 scale in the classroom. In addition to serving as a member of his school's French Club, he has volunteered as a youth basketball coach.

"Our conference is one of the best in the state year in and year out, and unfortunately for all of us he's only a junior, so we'll have to deal with him for another year," said Mike Stine, head coach of rival Naperville Central High. "But I love to see him compete. He's a special athlete. When you watch him play, he has a toughness and a will to win about him. He's not afraid to put that team on his back. He's the best player in the state of Illinois, and there are some pretty good ones out there."

Jackson will begin his senior year of high school next 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 the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with USA TODAY High School Sports, 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.

Jackson joins recent Gatorade Illinois Football Players of the Year Blake Winkler (2011-12, Lincoln-Way East High School), Reilly O'Toole (2010-11, Wheaton Warrenville South High School), Christian Lombard (2009-10, William Fremd), Chris Watt (2008-09, Glenbard West High School) and Steve Filer (2007-08, Mount Carmel) 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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