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**ITAWAMBA AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® MISSISSIPPI FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (November 29, 2012) — In its 28th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Ashton Shumpert of Itawamba Agricultural High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Mississippi Football Player of the Year. Shumpert is the first Gatorade Mississippi Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Itawamba Agricultural 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 Shumpert as Mississippi's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Shumpert 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-2, 195-pound senior running back and safety rushed for 1,787 yards and 25 touchdowns on 151 carries this past season, leading the Indians (12-1) to the Class 4A state quarterfinals despite missing the first three games of the season with an illness. Shumpert also caught 11 passes for 170 yards and three scores. A nominee for the U.S. Army All-American Game, he recorded 54 tackles and two interceptions on defense.

Shumpert has maintained a B average in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, as part of a town beautification project and as a youth football coach.

"Ashton Shumpert has been lights out in every game he has played this year," said Doug Jones, head coach of Corinth High. "He is dangerous on the field because he changes the game on both sides of the ball. I think he takes Itawamba from a good football team to a great football team."

Shumpert remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Shumpert joins recent Gatorade Mississippi Football Players of the Year Anthony Alford (2011-12, 2010-11, Petal High School), Dylan Favre (2009-10, St. Stanislaus College), Tyler Russell (2008-09, Meridian High School) and Charles Mitchell (2007-08, Clarksdale) 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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