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**LINCOLN SOUTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® NEBRASKA GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 14, 2013) — 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 Jessica Shepard of Lincoln Southeast High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Nebraska Girls Basketball Player of the Year. Shepard is the second Gatorade Nebraska Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lincoln Southeast 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 court, distinguishes Shepard as Nebraska's best high school girls basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Basketball Player of the Year award announced in March, Shepard joins an elite alumni association of past state girls basketball award-winners, including Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Diana Taurasi (1998-99 & 1999-00, Don Antonio Lugo HS, Calif.), Maya Moore (2005-06 Collins Hill HS, Ga.), Rashanda McCants (2004-05, Asheville HS, N.C.), Shyra Ely (1999-00, Ben Davis HS, Ind.) and Lisa Leslie (1988-89, Morningside HS, Calif.).

The 6-foot-3 sophomore wing led the Knights to a 24-3 record and the Class A state championship this past season. A returning First Team Super-State selection as named by The Lincoln Journal Star, Shepard averaged 24.6 points, 11.1 rebounds, 2.5 assists, 2.0 blocks and 1.8 steals per game. She amassed 26 points, 19 rebounds, five blocks, four assists and a steal in a 65-57, title-clinching victory against Bellevue West. Her 81 points in three state tournament games set a Class A record.

Shepard has maintained a 3.84 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of her church, People's City Mission, the Center for People in Need and Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach.

"Jess is far and away the best player in this year's field," said Jon Perone, head coach of rival Benson High. "Her versatility to handle the ball, come out and play on the perimeter, and score in the post is unique. Her size and ability cause matchup problems everywhere. Most importantly, Shepard sees the game and feels the game so well, her basketball IQ is second to none and that is why she is such a dominant player."

Shepard will begin her junior year of high school this fall and has verbally committed to play basketball on scholarship at the University of Nebraska in the fall of 2015.

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.

Shepard joins recent Gatorade Nebraska Girls Basketball Players of the Year Brianna Craig (2011-12, Lincoln Northeast High School), Alexis Akin-Otiko (2010-11, Bellevue West High School), Jordan Hooper (2009-10 & 2007-08, Alliance), K.K. Houser (2008-09, Lincoln Southeast), and Dominique Kelley (2006-07, Lincoln Northeast) 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 www.gatorade.com/poy.

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