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SPRINGFIELD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE® OREGON 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 **Mercedes Russell of Springfield High School** as its **2012-13 Gatorade Oregon Girls Basketball Player of the Year**. Russell is the first Gatorade Oregon Girls Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Springfield 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 Russell as Oregon'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, Russell 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 returning Gatorade Player of the Year, the 6-foot-5 senior center averaged 25.1 points, 12.3 rebounds, 5.5 blocks, 3.9 assists and 2.0 steals per game while shooting 70.3 percent from the field this past season, leading the Millers (24-4) to the Class 5A state championship game. A McDonald's All-American Game selection, a 2013 Women's Basketball Coaches Association All-America Game invitee and a two-time Class 5A State Player of the Year, Russell was a finalist for the Naismith Girl's High School Player of the Year Award. She concluded her prep basketball career with 2,273 points, 1,642 rebounds and 562 blocked shots.

Russell has maintained a 3.15 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of Oregon Amateur Basketball, the Special Olympics, a community beautification project and an elementary education literacy-outreach program. She has also donated her time coaching youth basketball and serving the needy during annual holiday seasons.

"Mercedes is just really athletic, has a great sense of timing and causes you not only to change your defense but, more importantly, your offense," said Paul Brothers, head coach of Willamette High. "You can talk all you want about her ability to score and rebound, but I think she allows everyone on their team to gamble on defense because she's there to swat away anything near the key."

Russell has signed a National Letter of Intent to play basketball on an athletic scholarship at the University of Tennessee 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 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.

Two time winner Russell joins Gatorade Oregon Girls Basketball Players of the Year Jen Reese (2010-11 & 2009-10, Clackamas High School), Kate Lanz (2008-09 & 2007-08, Central Catholic), and Michelle Jenkins (2006-07, Southridge) 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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