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**LAKE HIGHLAND PREPARATORY SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE® FLORIDA BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (March 21, 2013) — 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 Joel Berry of Lake Highland Preparatory School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Player of the Year. Berry is the first Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Player of the Year to be chosen from Lake Highland Preparatory 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 Berry as Florida's best high school boys basketball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year award to be announced in March, Berry joins an elite alumni association of past state boys basketball award winners, including Dwight Howard (2003-04, SW Atlanta Christian Academy, Ga.), Chauncey Billups (1993-94 & 1994-95, George Washington HS, Colo.), Jason Kidd (1991-92, St. Joseph Notre Dame HS, Calif.), Paul Pierce (1994-95, Inglewood HS, Calif.) and Chris Bosh (2001-02, Lincoln HS, Texas).

The 6-foot-1, 195-pound junior point guard led the Highlanders to a 24-5 record and the Class 4A state championship this past season. Berry averaged 25.3 points, 6.7 rebounds, 3.9 assists and 3.1 steals per game while shooting at 83 percent from the free throw line. Also the 2011-12 Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Player of the Year, he scored a game-high 21 points with four assists in a 67-50 win over St. Andrew's in the state final. Berry averaged 23.8 points per game in four postseason tournament contests.

Berry has maintained a 3.27 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally as a peer leader in his school community and as a youth basketball coach and camp counselor.

"Joel Berry is a tremendous player with very high-level skills," said Don Smith, head coach at Crooms Academy. "He has a very high basketball IQ which makes him like another coach on the floor."

Berry has verbally committed to play basketball on an athletic scholarship at the University of North Carolina beginning in the fall of 2014.

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 Berry joins Gatorade Florida Boys Basketball Players of the Year Austin Rivers (2010-11, Winter Park High School), Brandon Knight (2009-10 & 2008-09, Pine Crest School), Ray Shipman (2007-08, Monsignor Pace High School), and Nick Calathes (2006 - 07, Lake Howell) 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](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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