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Contact: Matt Schiffman (312-729-3672)

**OAK MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS SOCCER PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 21, 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 Toni Payne of Oak Mountain High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Alabama Girls Soccer Player of the Year. Payne is the second Gatorade Alabama Girls Soccer Player of the Year to be chosen from Oak Mountain 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 Payne as Alabama's best high school girls soccer player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Soccer Player of the Year award to be announced in May, Payne joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Alexi Lalas (1987-88, Cranbrook HS, Mich.), Heather O'Reilly (2001-02, East Brunswick HS, N.J.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-3 senior forward scored 47 goals and passed for 35 assists this past season, leading the Eagles (22-4-2) to the Class 6A state championship game. A member of the U.S. Soccer Under-20 Women's National Team, Payne was the 2012 Birmingham News Player of the Year. She concluded her prep soccer career with 141 goals and 92 assists.

Payne has maintained a 3.63 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally as a teacher in her church's Children's Ministry in addition to donating her time at a homeless shelter and food bank.

"What makes Toni so dangerous is her ability on the ball," said Todd Schaefer, head coach of Hoover High. "It is extremely difficult to take the ball from her. Her foot skills allow her to really hold it. I think she is invaluable when it comes to their success."

Payne has signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer on an athletic scholarship at Duke University 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.

Payne joins recent Gatorade Alabama Girls Soccer Players of the Year Bailee Hartnett (2011-12, Oak Mountain High School), Simone Charley (2010 - 11, Spain Park High School), Annalika Steyn (2009-10, Spain Park), Lauren Arnold (2008-09 Spain Park), Mary Nicholson (2007-08, Vestavia Hills), and Victoria Frederick (2006-2007, Huntsville) 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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