

Contact: Ashley Ginascol (312-729-3622)

**WATAUGA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® NORTH CAROLINA BASEBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (May 28, 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 Ryder Jones of Watauga High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade North Carolina Baseball Player of the Year. Jones is the first Gatorade North Carolina Baseball Player of the Year to be chosen from Watauga 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 Jones as North Carolina's best high school baseball player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Baseball Player of the Year award announced in May, Jones joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Roy Halladay (1994-95, Arvada West HS, Colo.), David Price (2003-04, Blackman HS, Tenn.), Chipper Jones (1989-90, Bolles School, Fla.), Derrek Lee (1992-93, El Camino HS, Calif.) and John Lester (2001-02, Bellarmine Prep, Wash.).

The 6-foot-4, 195-pound senior shortstop batted .461 with 11 home runs and 43 RBI this past season, leading the Pioneers to a 15-11 record. A Rawlings Preseason First Team All-American as named by Perfect Game USA, Jones recorded 31 runs, 21 walks and 11 doubles. He compiled a .652 on-base percentage and a .987 slugging percentage. Also a right-handed pitcher, Jones owned a 4-3 record with one save, a 1.23 ERA and 63 strikeouts in 40.1 innings-pitched. As a junior at Stillwater (Okla.) High last season, he captured 2012 Honorable Mention All-State honors from The Oklahoman.

Jones has maintained a 4.00 weighted GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society, he has donated his time as a peer tutor and youth baseball instructor in addition to volunteering locally as a blood donor, at a Humane Society shelter, as part of a youth literacy-outreach initiative and on behalf Oklahoma's Children's Hospital at Saint Francis.

"His playing ability speaks for its self," said Chip Watts, head coach of rival St. Stephens High. "This kid has one of the most pure swings. He was a man among boys and dominated the high school level. He is an excellent young man and plays the game the right way. Watauga head coach Pete Hardee does a great job with his baseball program, and he's been coached and molded under one of the best coaches around."

Jones has signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball on scholarship at Stanford University this fall, but is projected as an early round selection in next month's Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft.

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.

Jones joins recent Gatorade North Carolina Baseball Players of the Year Corey Seager (2011-12, Northwest Cabarrus High School), Dillon Maples (2010 - 11, Pinecrest High School), Matt Roberts (2009-10, Graham), Brian Goodwin (2008-09 Rocky Mount), Tyler Hanover (2007-08, North Davidson), and Madison Bumgarner (2006-2007, South Caldwell) 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.

###