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## **LITTLE ROCK CHRISTIAN ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 20, 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 Mark Guffin of Little Rock Christian Academy as its 2012-13 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Guffin is the first Gatorade Arkansas Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Little Rock Christian Academy.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the track, distinguishes Guffin as Arkansas's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Guffin joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Meb Keflezighi (1993-94, San Diego HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.) and Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.).

The 6-foot-1, 225-pound senior thrower won two individual state championships this spring, leading the Warriors to a fifth-place finish as a team at the Class 5A state meet. Guffin won the shot put with a throw of 54 feet, 1/4 inches and launched the discus 158-9 for his two gold medals. He also won a pair of individual titles at the Meet of Champions, claiming first place in the shot put (53-8) and the discus (183-8). A two-time First Team All-State selection, Guffin's throw of 195-2.5 at the Vilonia Relays is ranked as the nation's No. 14 mark by a prep competitor in 2013 at the time of his selection.

Guffin has maintained a 4.21 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society and a devoted parishioner in his church community, he has volunteered locally on behalf of the ALS Association and a homeless shelter.

"Mark Guffin went from not throwing far enough to be measured in most meets his freshmen and sophomore year to being the best thrower in the state of Arkansas," said Christy Nipper, head coach at Little Rock Christian Academy. "He is a real testament to where hard work, dedication, and focus can take an athlete. Through all his success he has remained humble and gracious. He is a true leader that leads his teammates by example."

Guffin has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on an athletic scholarship at the University of Alabama 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.

Guffin joins recent Gatorade Arkansas Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Chase Lamers (2011-12, Rogers High School), Andrew Irwin (2010-11 & 2009-10, Mt. Ida High School), Caleb Cross (2008-09, Newport), Jason Pelletier (2007-08, Bryant), and Spencer McCorkel (2006-2007, Bryant) 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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