

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: 1-800-88-GATOR (42867)

**Gatorade National Football Player of the Year:
Mitch Mustain**

Springdale (Ark.) quarterback named nation's top high school gridiron performer

SPRINGDALE, Ark. (December 6, 2005) – Entering its third decade of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade® Thirst Quencher, in partnership with *Scholastic Coach & Athletic Director* magazine, today announced Mitch Mustain of Springdale High School (Springdale, Ark.) as the 2005-06 Gatorade National Football Player of the Year.

The award, which recognizes athletic achievement as well as the academic performance and overall character of its recipient, distinguishes Mustain as the nation's best high school football player. A national advisory board comprised of sportswriters and sport-specific experts from around the country selected Mustain from the more than one million male high school football players nationwide. Mustain is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Male High School Athlete of the Year Award, to be presented at an awards ceremony the afternoon prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

Mustain, a 6-foot-3-inch, 204-pound senior quarterback, led Springdale to a 14-0 record, the Arkansas AAAAA state championship and current national rankings of No. 3 (*StudentSports*) and No. 8 (*USA Today*) respectively. On the season he completed 190 of 270 passes for 3,817 yards and 47 touchdowns. In the state championship tilt, Mustain connected on 17 of 28 throws for 344 yards and five touchdowns in Springdale's 54-20 win over previously unbeaten and second-ranked West Memphis High School.

Mustain's 3,817 passing yards established a new Arkansas single-season record; a milestone he reached despite being rested for significant portions of lopsided games. In Springdale's 14 wins – two of which were decisive victories over out-of-state powers Evangel Christian Academy (Shreveport, La.) and Jenks High School (Jenks, Okla.) – the 35-point mercy rule went into effect 13 times. His 70.4 completion percentage this season is also a new state record, as is the 196 points amassed by Springdale's offense in four playoff games.

--more--

Mustain's talents will be on display for a national audience in January when he suits up for the 6th annual U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio.

"Mitch is the best high school quarterback that has ever come through the state of Arkansas," said Springdale head coach Gus Malzahn. "He has all the tools to be a great one."

Academically, Mustain is a B student who scored 26 on the ACT college entrance exam. A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, he is also a youth leader at the First Baptist Church and speaks to students at local elementary and middle schools about the importance of character.

"Without question, Mitch is deserving of recognition as the nation's best high school football player based on his statistics and the impact his play had on Springdale's remarkable season," said Gatorade Senior Vice President of Sports Marketing Tom Fox. "But he is also a shining example to peers and aspiring young players of what a leader and a student-athlete should be. He represents everything we hope for in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient."

The Gatorade Player of the Year program recognizes one winner in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and awards one National Player of the Year in five boys sports (football, soccer, basketball, baseball, track & field) and five girls sports (volleyball, soccer, basketball, softball, track & field). In addition to athletic performance, award criteria include the achievement in the classroom and overall character. Previous Gatorade National Player of the Year award winners include:

- NFL all-time leading rusher Emmitt Smith
- Reigning NFL Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- WNBA all-time leading scorer and rebounder Lisa Leslie
- Captain of the U.S. men's national soccer team Claudio Reyna
- Reigning American League Most Valuable Player Alex Rodriguez
- Beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Reigning 200-meter world champion Allyson Felix

For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information and lists of past winners and future announcement dates, visit www.gatorade.com/playeroftheyear.

ALL-TIME GATORADE NATIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR HONOREES

Year	Name	High School/Location	Status
2005-06	Mitch Mustain	Springdale HS/Springdale, AR	High School Senior
2004-05	Greg Paulus	Christian Brothers Academy/Syracuse, NY	Duke University (Basketball)
2003-04	Jeff Byers	Loveland HS/Loveland, CO	University of Southern California
2002-03	Kyle Wright	Monte Vista HS/Danville, CA	University of Miami (Fla.)
2001-02	Lorenzo Booker	St. Bonaventure HS/Ventura, CA	Florida State University
2000-01	Joe Mauer	Cretin-Derham Hall/St. Paul, MN	Minnesota Twins
1999-00	Brock Berlin	Evangel Christian Academy/Shreveport, LA	NFL Free Agent
1998-99	Chris Lewis	Polytechnic HS/Long Beach, CA	San Jose SaberCats
1997-98	Ronald Curry	Hampton HS/Hampton, VA	Oakland Raiders
1996-97	Travis Minor	Catholic HS/Baton Rouge, LA	Miami Dolphins
1995-96	Tim Couch	Leslie County HS/Hyden, KY	Retired from NFL
1994-95	Brock Huard	Puyallup HS/Puyallup, WA	Retired from NFL
1993-94	Peyton Manning	Isidore Newman School/New Orleans, LA	Indianapolis Colts
1992-93	Ron Powlus	Berwick HS/Berwick, PA	University of Notre Dame (Staff)
1991-92	Chris Walsh	Cretin-Derham Hall/St. Paul, MN	University of Minnesota Grad.
1990-91	Marquette Smith	Winter Park HS/Lake Howell, FL	Osceola Outlaws (Coach)
1989-90	Robert Smith	Euclid HS/Euclid, OH	Retired from NFL
1988-89	Terry Kirby	Tabb HS/Tabb, VA	Retired from NFL
1987-88	Curtis Bray	Gateway HS/Monroeville, PA	University of Pittsburgh (Coach)
1986-87	Emmitt Smith	Escambia HS/Pensacola, FL	Retired from NFL
1985-86	Jeff George	Warren Central HS/Indianapolis, IN	Retired from NFL