

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**GATORADE® NATIONAL GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE  
YEAR:  
MOLLY SEIDEL**

*American Distance Record Holder and Professional Distance Runner Shalane Flanagan Surprises Standout  
with Elite Honor*

**Hartland, Wis.** (Jan 24, 2012) – In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS today announced Molly Seidel of University Lake School (Hartland, Wis.) as its 2011-12 Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Seidel was surprised with the news during her AP Literature class by 2011 World XC Championships Bronze Medalist Shalane Flanagan, who earned Gatorade Massachusetts Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year honors in 1999-00.

“When I received the award, it was a really significant moment for me, so it felt great to surprise Molly with the news and invite her into one of the most prestigious legacy programs in high school sports,” said Flanagan, recent winner of the 2012 summer games U.S. marathon trials, who currently holds the American women’s record in the 10,000-meter run. “Gatorade has been on the sidelines fueling athletic performance for years, so to be recognized by a brand that understands the game and truly helps athletes perform is a huge honor for these kids.”

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the racecourse, distinguishes Seidel as the nation’s best high school girls cross country runner. A national advisory panel comprised of sport-specific experts and sports journalists helped select Seidel from more than 200,000 high school girls cross country runners nationwide. Seidel is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade Female High School Athlete of the Year award, to be presented at a special ceremony prior to The ESPY Awards in July.

The 5-foot-4 senior won the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships this past season, breaking the tape in 17:08. The 2011 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Area Runner of the Year, Seidel also claimed first place at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships with a winning time of 17:22. The four-time Wisconsin Cross Country Coaches Association First Team All-State selection completed an undefeated season this past fall and earned her fourth consecutive Division 3 individual state championship, joining three-time Olympian Suzy Favor-Hamilton as the only Wisconsin runners to ever win state cross country titles all four prep seasons. Seidel covered the 4K state championship course in 13:39.59, more than 40 seconds ahead of her next-closest competitor.

Seidel has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom and is a National Merit Scholarship Program Semifinalist. An active parishioner in her St. Joan of Arc church community, she serves as vice president of her school's student government. Also an accomplished pianist and ukulele player, Seidel has further donated her time on behalf of The Gathering interfaith meal ministry, the Lifestriders Equine Physical Therapy Center and as a sailing instructor in association with the Pine Lake Yacht Club.

“After finishing a heartbreaking 11th at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships in fall of 2010, Molly Seidel was highly motivated to get to San Diego this past December,” said ESPNHS/Dyestat Senior Editor Steve Underwood. “She got a good taste of national track competition last spring, then dominated Wisconsin this past fall even more thoroughly than she did the year before. When it again came time to face the stiff competition at Foot Locker Midwest, she not only qualified but won with room to spare. In San Diego, she refused to get rattled by runner-up Erin Finn's flying start and produced a great come-from-behind victory. She's an amazing all-around student-athlete.”

Seidel has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at the University of Notre Dame beginning this fall.

“Without question, Molly is deserving of recognition as the nation's best high school girls cross country runner based on her statistics on the course and the impact her accomplishments have had on University Lake School's success,” said Gatorade President North America and Global Chief Marketing Officer Sarah Robb O'Hagan. “But she is also a shining example to peers and aspiring young athletes of what a leader and a student-athlete should be. She represents everything we hope for in a Gatorade Player of the Year recipient.”

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 ESPNHS and the Gatorade high school sports leadership team, 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.

Former notable Gatorade National Players of the Year include:

- Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning
- WNBA all-time leading scorer and rebounder Lisa Leslie
- NFL all-time leading rusher Emmitt Smith
- Two-time beach volleyball gold medalist Kerri Walsh
- Three-time 200-meter World Champion Allyson Felix

For more information on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of former winners, and future announcement dates, visit the Gatorade Player of the Year Web site at <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com>, on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY](http://www.facebook.com/GatoradePOY) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/Gatorade](http://www.twitter.com/Gatorade).

### **ALL-TIME GATORADE NATIONAL GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNERS OF THE YEAR**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
2011-12	Molly Siedel	University Lake School/Hartland, WI	High School Senior
2010-11	Aisling Cuffe	Cornwall Central/New Windsor, NY	Stanford University
2009-10	Megan Goethals	Rochester/Rochester Hills, MI	University of Washington
2008-09	Jordan Hasay	Mission College Prep/San Luis Obispo, CA	University of Oregon
2007-08	Ashley Brasovan	Wellington/Wellington, FL	Duke University

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