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## **EAST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE IOWA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 13, 2011) — In its 26<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Shelby Houlihan of East High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Iowa Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Houlihan is the first Gatorade Iowa Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from East 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 racecourse, distinguishes Houlihan as Iowa's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Houlihan joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-00, 2000-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Kevin Garnett (1992-93, Maudlin HS, S.C.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-3 senior raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 13:40. A four-time Elite All-State selection as named by the Iowa Association of Track Coaches, Houlihan placed second at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships in 17:55.26 in addition to finishing 28th at the Nike Cross Nationals Final in 19:35.6. She captured first place at the Tim Thomas Classic, Storm Lake Invitational, Sioux City Championships, Doug Hendershot Invitational, Marsha Koeberick Invitational, West Sioux Invitational, Missouri River Athletic Conference Championships and Class 4A District/Regional meet this past fall. She placed third at the 2007, 2008 and 2009 Class 4A state meets in her previous three seasons.

Also a track standout, Houlihan has maintained a 3.41 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally at the humane society and a soup kitchen in addition to coordinating fundraising efforts on behalf of multiple charitable road races.

"Where do I begin?" said Sioux City East High head coach Rochelle Babcock. "Shelby is a very hard worker and a determined individual. She knows what she needs to do to continue to be the best. When Shelby got in any race this year, it was not a matter of whether or not she was going to win. Instead, it was simply working on the different parts of each race to improve them so that she would and could continue to grow as an athlete and a runner, and this allowed her to compete at an even higher level. I am extremely proud of who she is."

Houlihan remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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 ESPN RISE 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.

Houlihan joins Gatorade Iowa Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Two-time winner Katie Flood (2007-08 & 2009-10, Dowling Catholic), and Ashlie Decker (2008-09, Dowling Catholic) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

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 [playeroftheyear.gatorade.com](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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