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**SHAKOPEE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 Maria Hauger of Shakopee High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Hauger is the first Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Shakopee 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 Hauger as Minnesota'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, Hauger 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-4 sophomore raced to her second straight Class AA individual state championship this past season with a time of 14:18.9. The returning Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Hauger also captured fifth place at the 2010 Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships with a time of 18:06.53 and earned 64<sup>th</sup> place at the 2010 Nike Cross Nationals Final, crossing the line in 20:11.5. Hauger was the fastest Minnesota runner at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships, finishing 29<sup>th</sup> with a time of 18:37.3.

Hauger has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. A member of her school's student council and the National Junior Honor Society, she has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple charity-fundraiser initiatives.

"Maria Hauger is tenacious in her running and always consistent in her performances," said Gail Grieme, head coach of rival Monticello High. "She attacks every race from the beginning and she won this year's state meet in a convincing way."

Hauger will begin her junior year of high school 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 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.

Two-time winner Hauger joins Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Cassy Opitz (2008-09, Eden Prairie), and Laura Hughes (2007-08, Mankato West) 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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