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## **WESTMOORE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE OKLAHOMA 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 Noemi Hernandez of Westmoore High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Hernandez is the first Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Westmoore 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 Hernandez as Oklahoma'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, Hernandez 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 6A individual state championship this past season with a time of 11:26.90, leading the Jaguars to third place as a team. Also the Runner of the Year as named by The Oklahoman, Hernandez placed 12th at the Arkansas/Oklahoma All-Star Meet in 19:23.06. She also finished second at the Edmond Santa Fe Invitational, third at the Class 6A regional meet in Norman, fourth at both the Edmond Dog Pack and Edmond Pre-State Meet and seventh at the Oklahoma State University Cowboy Jamboree Class 6A race this past season. Hernandez finished 10th at the 2009 Class 6A state meet as a junior and 25th at the 2008 Class 6A state meet as a sophomore.

Hernandez has maintained a 3.86 weighted GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade Award's broad criteria. A member of her church's choir, she has also volunteered on behalf of multiple community-service initiatives on behalf of her church.

"She was important to our success in more ways than just her athletic abilities," said Westmoore High head coach Laura Clay. "She has such a positive outlook on her running, life and work ethic. Family and respect are very important to her, and you can see that in the way that she carries herself. She's done whatever we've asked of her and more. She has the ability and work ethic only to go up, and she's just hit the tip of the iceberg."

Hernandez has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete on an athletic scholarship at Oklahoma Christian University beginning 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.

Hernandez joins Gatorade Oklahoma Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jori Davis (2009-10, Piedmont), Andrea Lewis (2008-09, Bishop Kelley), and Sara Vaughn (2007-08, Union) 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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