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**PLANO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE TEXAS GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 13, 2011) — In its 26th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Rachel Johnson of Plano Senior High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Johnson is the first Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Plano Senior 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 Johnson as Texas'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, Johnson 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-5 senior raced to the title at the 2010 Nike Cross Nationals Final with a time of 18:18.6. Johnson also finished second this past season at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 17:27 and won the Class 5A individual state championship in 10:55.41. She earned victories at the NXN South Regional Championships (in 17:51), the Nike South Invitational and the Rick Neill Invitational.

Johnson has maintained a 3.71 GPA in the classroom. As an invite-only member of Plano Senior High's Peer Assistance and Leadership class, Johnson mentors at-risk youth at a local elementary school on a weekly basis and recently served as Co-Chair of PAL's participation in Operation Christmas Child, an international holiday humanitarian effort for the needy. Johnson has also volunteered as part of multiple service missions on behalf of her Parkway Hills Baptist Church community in addition to donating her time at the Dayspring Senior Living Center, where she visits with residents.

"Rachel always gives a great effort, and she inspires the other kids on the team," said Plano Senior head coach Gene Cahill. "She's shown that hard work leads to steady improvement, which then leads to great accomplishments."

Johnson has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Baylor 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.

Johnson joins Gatorade Texas Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year three-time winner Chelsey Sveinsson (2007-08, 2008-09 & 2009-10, Greenhill School) 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.

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