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**HIDDEN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE VIRGINIA 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 Annie LeHardy of Hidden Valley High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. LeHardy is the first Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Hidden Valley 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 LeHardy as Virginia'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, LeHardy 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 a the Class AA individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 17:34.00, leading the Titans to first place as a team. Also the Runner of the Year as named by MileStat.com and the Roanoke Times, LeHardy placed second at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championships in 17:24.40, then finished 26th at the Nike Cross Nationals Final in 19:28.50. She also captured first place at her district and regional meets this past season, clocking course records at each event. She took sixth at the Knights Crossing Invitational, 13th at the Greensboro Invitational in North Carolina and 14th at the prestigious Great American Cross Country Festival. LeHardy finished third at the 2009 Class AA state meet as a junior, second at the 2008 Class AA state meet as a sophomore and seventh at the 2007 Class AA state meet as a freshman.

LeHardy has maintained a 4.10 GPA in the classroom, ranks No. 1 in her graduating class and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade Award's broad criteria. A member of the National Beta Club and the Titan Twelve community-service organization, she has donated her time on behalf of her church's youth group and as a full-care service provider to the elderly in their homes. Also a Red Cross certified lifeguard, LeHardy has worked for her local YMCA and Elks chapters.

"In the time I have coached Annie, I have seen growth and development from this fine young lady," said Hidden Valley High head coach Daniel King. "She is full of courage, integrity and commitment. She has an incredible will to succeed. What has distinguished Annie from her competition, above all, is that she has continued to put her team before herself in a very unselfish manner regardless of the situation."

LeHardy 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.

LeHardy joins Gatorade Virginia Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Kathleen Stevens (2009-10, Blacksburg), Megan Marsico (2008-09, Glenvar), and Kathleen Lautzenheiser (2007-08, Midlothian) 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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