

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)

**ELKINS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 20, 2011) — In its 26th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Christian Heymsfield of Elkins High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Heymsfield is the first Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Elkins 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 Heymsfield as Arkansas's best high school boys cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Heymsfield 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, 100-pound junior raced to his second straight Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:29.8, leading the Elks to the state title as a team. A three-time First Team All-State selection, Heymsfield captured first place at the annual Elkins Invitational back in September, breaking the tape nearly a minute ahead of his next-closest competitor.

Heymsfield has maintained a 4.14 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 his church youth group, he has volunteered locally on behalf of the Engineering Research Center at the University of Arkansas.

"Christian Heymsfield is one of the finest runners I've ever had the chance to watch," said Ben Lairamore, head coach of rival Eureka Springs High. "He is as highly competitive as any kid in the nation."

Heymsfield will begin his senior 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.

Heymsfield joins Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Christopher Marchman (2009-10, Sheridan), Cameron Efurd (2008-09, Rogers), and Aaron Hamilton (2007-08, Rogers) 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.

###