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**NORTH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE INDIANA 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 Futsum Zeinasellassie of North Central High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Indiana Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Zeinasellassie is the first Gatorade Indiana Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from North Central 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 Zeinasellassie as Indiana'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, Zeinasellassie 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-7 junior raced to his second consecutive individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:16.6, leading the Panthers to fourth place as a team. Zeinasellassie earned All-American status by finishing second at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 15:10, and also took second at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships in 14:47.6. Zeinasellassie won the Brebeuf Invitational, the FlashRock Invitational, the Culver Academies Invitational, the Artesian Classic, the Brebeuf Regional Championships and the Carmel Semi-State Championships this past fall.

Zeinasellassie has maintained a B average in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered raising funds to benefit a school in Kenya.

"Futsum has a tremendous work ethic and he loves to compete," said North Central head coach Rick Stover. "He's also very humble and genuine ... a very positive individual and an outstanding leader."

Zeinasellassie 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.

Zeinasellassie joins Gatorade Indiana Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Tyler Byrne (2009-10, North Harrison), Drew Shields (2008-09, Fishers), and Mike Fout (2007-08, LaPorte) 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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