

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)

MANCHESTER CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED GATORADE NEW HAMPSHIRE 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 Samuel Gagnon of Manchester Central High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade New Hampshire Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Gagnon is the first Gatorade New Hampshire Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Manchester 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 Gagnon as New Hampshire'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, Gagnon 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-10 senior raced to a ninth-place finish at the Nike Cross Nationals Northeast Regional championships this past season with a time of 16:21.5. A First Team All-State selection as named by the New Hampshire Coaches Association and New Hampshire Union Leader, Gagnon placed second in leading the Little Green to team titles at both the Division 1 championships and Meet of Champions. He also finished 18th at the New England Cross Country Championships, as Manchester Central captured New Hampshire's first regional title since 1999. Gagnon also captured first place at the Manchester City Cross Country Meet this past fall. He finished 10th at the 2009 Meet of Champions as a junior.

Gagnon has maintained a 3.94 GPA in the classroom and represents one of the state's top academic candidates in meeting the Gatorade Award's broad criteria. Also an accomplished violinist, he has volunteered on behalf of the Salvation Army, The American Legion and the Boy Scouts of America as an Eagle Scout.

"Sam is one of the most mentally tough, consistent, intelligent and coachable runners I have had in my coaching career," said Manchester Central High head coach Michael Hennessy. "Both his teammates and his opponents respect both his athletic abilities and personal qualities."

Gagnon 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.

Gagnon joins Gatorade New Hampshire Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Eric Jenkins (2009-10, Portsmouth), Eric Malnati (2008-09, Fall Mountain Regional), and Alex McGrath (2007-08, ConVal) 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.

###