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**COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE FLORIDA BOYS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 23, 2011) — In its 26<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN RISE, today announced Armando del Valle of Columbus High School as its 2010-11 Gatorade Florida Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year. del Valle is the first Gatorade Florida Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Columbus 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 track, distinguishes del Valle as Florida's best high school boys track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, del Valle joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Meb Keflezighi (1993-94, San Diego HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.) and Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.).

The 5-foot-8 senior won the 1,600-meter run with a time of 4:04.49 and the 3,200-meter run in 9:09.08 at the Class 4A state championship meet this spring, leading the Explorers to a third-place finish as a team. Del Valle also anchored the 4x800-meter relay squad to a state title in 7:49.81. The *Miami Herald* Athlete of the Year, he won the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional Championship during the cross country season.

Del Valle has maintained a 4.29 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of the Special Olympics, an area homeless shelter and a summer camp for mentally-challenged children.

"He has the best kick that I've seen in a long time—I think he can outkick anyone at the end of a race," said Columbus High distance coach Jorge Fleitas. "Armando's one of those special kids that you only see once in a lifetime. He gave as much to the sport and his team as anyone I've ever coached."

Del Valle has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete in track and field on scholarship at Florida State University 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.

del Valle joins recent Gatorade Florida Boys Track & Field Athletes of the Year Cody Riggs (2009-10, St. Thomas Aquinas), Neamen Wise (2008-09, Lake Brantley), and Jeff Demps (2007-08, South Lake) among the state's list of former award winners.

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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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