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**MCGILL-TOOLEN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 12, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN HS, today announced Carmen Carlos of McGill-Toolen Catholic High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Carlos is the first Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from McGill-Toolen Catholic 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 Carlos as Alabama'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, Carlos 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.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-6 junior raced to a third consecutive Class 6A individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 17:19.76, leading the Yellow Jackets to second place as a team. The state's two-time returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Carlos placed 28th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 17:59. Also a three-time Runner of the Year as named by the Mobile Press-Register, she finished eighth at the 2008 Class 6A state meet as an eighth-grader.

A standout track athlete and an accomplished artist, Carlos has maintained a 4.22 weighted GPA in the classroom. A member of the Junior National Honor Society and a student ambassador at her school, she has volunteered locally at a nursing home, as part of the Servants of the Poor service club and on behalf of her church as well as McGill-Toolen Catholic's campus ministry.

"She's starting to realize that to run really fast, it's going to hurt a little longer," said McGill-Toolen Catholic High head coach Drew Bentley. "She learned she can run through pain and run faster. She's never been beaten by an Alabama athlete in high school, and every time she goes back to a course she gets better. She destroyed the state meet course record and had to do it alone. It was the first time she ever told me what she planned on doing, and it was a big culmination. It was awesome."

Carlos will begin her 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 HS 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.

Carlos joins Gatorade Alabama Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year Madeline Morgan (2008-09 & 2007-08, Mountain Brook) 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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