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**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN DAY SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE GEORGIA 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 Grace Tinkey of First Presbyterian Day School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Georgia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Tinkey is the first Gatorade Georgia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from First Presbyterian Day 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 Tinkey as Georgia'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, Tinkey 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-2 junior raced to a second consecutive Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:59.27, leading the Vikings to third place as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Tinkey placed third at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 17:08 in addition to finishing sixth at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 17:37. Also the four-time All-Middle Georgia Runner of the Year as named by The Macon Telegraph, she won the 2008 and 2009 Georgia Independent Schools Association Class AAA individual state championship as a freshman and eighth-grader.

Also a track standout, Tinkey has maintained an A average in the classroom. In addition to donating her time as a youth athletic instructor, she has volunteered locally at a food bank, as part of a youth ministry and on behalf of an animal shelter as well as with the Ronald McDonald House Charities and Lighthouse Family Retreat for children with cancer.

"Tinkey had to overcome a midseason injury that threatened her chances to progress among the nation's elite," said Steve Underwood, ESPNHS DyeStat Senior Editor. "But she rebounded to dominate her state meet, qualify easily for Foot Locker nationals and then finish sixth in the nation in San Diego—her best finish in three Foot Locker finals, setting her up to join the select group of four-time qualifiers in 2012."

Tinkey 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.

Tinkey joins Gatorade Georgia Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Nicky Akande (2009-10, Collins Hill), Amanda Winslow (2008-09, Collins Hill), and Emily Reese (2007-08, Chamblee) 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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