

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)**

**WARSAW COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE INDIANA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 12, 2012) — In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN HS, today announced Ashley Erba of Warsaw Community High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Indiana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Erba is the first Gatorade Indiana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Warsaw Community 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 Erba as Indiana'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, Erba 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 the individual state championship this past season, clocking a meet-record time of 18:05.6. Erba also won her sectional, regional and semi-state championships, and finished first at the New Prairie Invitational, the New Haven Classic, the Warsaw Tiger Invitational, the Huntington North Invitational and the Baron Classic.

Erba has maintained an A average in the classroom. A member of the local Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter, she has volunteered locally on behalf of youth sports programs.

"She's a very disciplined runner and her progress this year was wonderful," said Culver Academies head coach Mike Chastain. "She is coached well, she has the attitude of a winner and she keeps everything on target. She was consistent the entire year."

Erba 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.

Erba joins Gatorade Indiana Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Waverly Neer (2010-11 & 2009-10, Culver Academies), Sarah Higgens (2008-09, Center Grove), and Alex Banfich (2007-08, Culver Academies) 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

###