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**DUPONT MANUAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE KENTUCKY 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 Cassidy Hale of duPont Manual High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Hale is the first Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from duPont Manual 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 Hale as Kentucky'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, Hale 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-7 junior raced to the Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:55.89, leading the Rams to fifth place as a team. The 2011 Kentucky Track and Cross County Coaches Association Junior Runner of the Year, Hale earned 15th place at the Foot Locker South Regional championships, finishing in 17:41.

Hale has maintained a 3.50 GPA in the classroom. An accomplished violinist with her school's orchestra, she maintains a part-time job and has volunteered locally on behalf of area charity road races.

"Cassidy Hale is a tremendous leader who encourages all the kids regardless of their skill level," said duPont Manual head coach Debra Moore. "Athletically, she's the real deal. We have tough competition here in Kentucky and she just put the gauntlet down at our state meet and went for it."

Hale 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.

Hale joins Gatorade Kentucky Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Emma Brink (2010-11, 2009-10, & 2007-08) Sacred Heart Academy) and Kaitlin Snapp (2008-09, Danville) 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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