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**WEST BLOOMFIELD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MICHIGAN 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 Erin Finn of West Bloomfield High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Finn is the first Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from West Bloomfield 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 Finn as Michigan'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, Finn 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-1 junior raced to second at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships this past season with a time of 17:24. Finn won the Div. I state championships, clocking a 17:22.6. She also finished third at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional Championships and captured the Spartan Invitational with a course-record time of 17:16.

Finn has maintained a 4.15 GPA in the classroom. Also a talented musician, she has volunteered locally on behalf of an area food bank.

"Erin has the best work ethic of any runner I've ever met," said West Bloomfield head coach Nate Belill. "Whatever race she was in this year, she would challenge girls and take it out hard. She's not one to wait around or lay back, no matter what the competition is."

Finn 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.

Finn joins Gatorade Michigan Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Gabrielle Anzalone (2010-11, Grand Blanc High School), Megan Goethals (2009-10 & 2008-09, Rochester), and Katie Haines (2007-08, Rockford) 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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