

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

**TUPELO HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI 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 Christina Daniels of Tupelo High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Daniels is the first Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Tupelo 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 Daniels as Mississippi'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, Daniels 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-3 freshman raced to the Class 6A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:08.5, leading the Golden Wave to the state title as a team. Daniels placed third at the Foot Locker South Regional freshmen championships in 19:11. She captured second place at the 2010 Class 6A state meet as an eighth-grader and finished 11<sup>th</sup> in 2009 as a seventh-grader.

Also an accomplished singer, Daniels has maintained a 4.00 GPA in the classroom in addition to attending a prestigious math and leadership camp at the Mississippi School of Math and Science. She has volunteered locally as a peer tutor, at an animal shelter, as part of holiday concerts for senior citizens and on behalf of her church's youth group.

"Christina is very steady and consistent, both in her races and training," said Tupelo High head coach Anna Sloan. "She leads by example and exhibits a humble team-first attitude. She is on the front lines cheering for and encouraging younger runners, and eager to welcome new team members. She exhibits the highest level of sportsmanship, offering congratulations and establishing friendships, even with competitive rivals. She is extremely coachable. Christina has improved steadily throughout her running career and continually strives to get better."

Daniels will begin her sophomore 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.

Daniels joins Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Elisabeth Gaillet (2010-11, St. Andrew's Episcopal School), and Cory McGee (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Pass Christian), 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).

###