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**NORTH STAR HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 Jeralyn Poe of North Star High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Poe is the first Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from North Star 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 Poe as Nebraska'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, Poe 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-5 freshman raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 14:38.5. A 2011 Nebraska Coaches Association Cross Country Super State selection, Poe won the Class A-1 District Cross Country meet in 15:25.80 and earned 58th place at the 2011 Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships, crossing the line in 19:31.2.

Poe has maintained an A average in the classroom. She has volunteered locally as a library aide and has donated her time reading to elementary school students.

"Jeralyn Poe is a very hard worker," said Kirk Skiles, head coach of rival Lincoln East High. "It was certainly no fluke that she won a state title. She really figured out how to race and put herself in a position to win."

Poe 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.

Poe joins Gatorade Nebraska Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Aubree Worden (2010-11 & 2009-10, Scottsbluff High School), Kelli Budd (2008-09, Marian), and Emily Sisson (2007-08, Millard North) 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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