

Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)

**DEL NORTE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 Jenna Thurman of Del Norte High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade New Mexico Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Thurman is the first Gatorade New Mexico Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Del Norte 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 Thurman as New Mexico'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, Thurman 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-8 junior raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 19:09.8, leading the Knights to fourth place as a team. Thurman also won the city and district championships, and finished first at the Rio Rancho Jamboree.

Thurman has maintained a 4.18 GPA in the classroom. Also a soccer standout, she has volunteered locally with multiple community service initiatives as a member of the National Honor Society.

"Jenna loves to run and she really works hard," said Del Norte head coach Fred Polich. "She loves the hilly, difficult courses—the harder the course, the better."

Thurman 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.

Thurman joins Gatorade New Mexico Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Julia Foster (2010-11 & 2009-10, Albuquerque Academy), Clara Milne (2008-09, Albuquerque Academy), and Rachel Velarde (2007-08, Eldorado) 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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