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

**SOUTH EUGENE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE OREGON 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 Sara Tsai of South Eugene High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Oregon Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Tsai is the first Gatorade Oregon Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from South Eugene 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 Tsai as Oregon'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, Tsai 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 freshman raced to second at the Class 6A state meet this past season with a time of 18:10, leading the Axemen to the state title as a team. Tsai then finished fifth at the Nike Cross Nationals Northwest Regional championships in 18:27.9 and was 15th at the NXN Final, clocking an 18:17. She also earned victories at the Special District 1 Championships and the Concordia Adidas Classic.

Tsai has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of youth soccer programs and has served as part of her school's student government.

"Sara's talent is obvious, but her personality and demeanor are more significant to her long-term success," said South Eugene head coach Jeff Hess. "She's incredibly supportive of her teammates, but also completely focused on her own preparation and performance."

Tsai 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.

Tsai joins Gatorade Oregon Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Annamarie Maag (2010-11 & 2009-10, Jesuit High School), and Taylor Wallace (2008-09 & 2007-08, Henley), 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).

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