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**HOMER-CENTER HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE PENNSYLVANIA 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 Angel Piccirillo of Homer-Center High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Pennsylvania Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Piccirillo is the first Gatorade Pennsylvania Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Homer-Center 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 Piccirillo as Pennsylvania'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, Piccirillo 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-9 senior raced to her second straight Class AA individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:31. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Piccirillo won the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championship in 18:01.4 and finished 13th nationally at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships. She also earned victories at the Crimson Hawk Invitational, the Indiana County Invitational, the Heritage Conference Championships, the District 6 Championships, the Harry Groves Spiked Shoe Invitational, the Pittsburgh Central Catholic Invitational and the PTXC 3 Invitational.

Piccirillo has maintained an A average in the classroom. Vice president of the senior class, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Salvation Army, the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and blood-donation drives.

"Angel doesn't settle for second best in any area," said Homer-Center head coach Michael Gentile. "She's driven by something indescribable. Her dedication and commitment to excellence as an athlete is only surpassed by her dedication and commitment in the classroom."

Piccirillo has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Villanova University beginning 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.

Piccirillo joins Gatorade Pennsylvania Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Sara Sargent (2009-10, Pennsbury), Sophia Ziemian (2008-09, Lewisburg Area), and Neely Spence (2007-08, Shippensburg) 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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