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**ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA 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 Alex Hess of Roosevelt High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Hess is the second Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Roosevelt 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 Hess as South Dakota'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, Hess 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 senior raced to the Class AA individual state championship this past season with a time of 14:19.5, setting a state meet course record. A 2011 First Team All-State selection, Hess earned 59th place at the 2011 Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships in 19:31 and placed 101st at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships, crossing the line in 19:40.

Hess has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom and is a National Merit Scholarship Program Semifinalist. An active member of her church community, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the American Cancer Society, the Boys and Girls Club of America, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

"Alex Hess is one of the finest distance runners in South Dakota," said Jesse Coy, head coach of rival Rapid City Stevens High. "She ran exceptionally well at the state meet this year, winning with a great time."

Hess remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Hess joins Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Tamara Gorman (2010-11, Rapid City Stevens High School), Madeleine Takahashi (2009-10, Sturgis Brown), Seanna Kautz (2008-09, Roosevelt), and Mariah Hofer (2007-08, Yankton) 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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