

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

**RICHFORD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE VERMONT 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 Elle Purrier of Richford High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Purrier is the first Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Richford 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 Purrier as Vermont'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, Purrier 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-3 junior raced to her second straight Division 3 individual state championship this past season, breaking the tape in 19:11.9. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Purrier won the New England Cross Country Championships with a time of 18:01 and the Nike Cross Nationals Northeast Regional championship in 18:30.6. She also earned titles at the Essex Invitational, the Harwood Invitational, the Burlington Invitational and the Northern Vermont Athletic Conference Championships.

Purrier has maintained a 3.93 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of youth track programs and has delivered care baskets to elderly residents of the community.

"Elle is able to push herself unlike any student-athlete I've ever met," said Richford head coach Andrew Hathaway. "The push comes from within, whether or not there's a watch on her."

Purrier 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.

Purrier joins Gatorade Vermont Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Hannah Rowe (2009-10 & 2008-09, St. Johnsbury Academy), and Sarah Lange (2007-08, Brattleboro Union) 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).

###