

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

**NORTH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE WASHINGTON 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 Katie Knight of North Central High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Washington Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Knight is the first Gatorade Washington Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from North Central 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 Knight as Washington'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, Knight 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-6 junior raced to the Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 17:10.6. Knight also captured third at the Nike Cross Nationals Final in 17:45. She earned victories at the Bob Firman Invitational and the Nike Border Clash, and finished second at the NXN Northwest Regional championships in 17:58.1.

Knight has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally feeding needy families and has participated in a cleanup initiative at an area park.

"Katie is the most focused and dedicated runner I have ever helped coach," said North Central High head coach Dempsey Ortega. "It's rare to find such a gifted athlete who is willing to put in the time and effort to be the best and not just rely on pure talent."

Knight 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.

Knight joins Gatorade Washington Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Amy-Eloise Neale (2010-11 & 2009-10, Glacier Peak High School), Alyssa Andrews (2008-09, Gig Harbor), and Andrea Nelson (2007-08, Shadle Park) 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).

###