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**ST. MARYS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Maggie Drazba of St. Marys High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Drazba is the first Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from St. Marys 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 Drazba as West Virginia'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, Drazba 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-1 junior raced to the Class AA-A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:25.4, leading the Blue Devils to second place as a team. A three-time First Team All-State selection, Drazba took 13th place at the Foot Locker South Regional championships, crossing the line in 17:40.

Drazba has maintained a 4.05 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of her church community and the sports editor of her school newspaper, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Boys and Girls Club of America and the National Honor Society.

"Maggie Drazba is one of the most elite female runners who has ever graced a running surface in West Virginia in my opinion," said Jeff Lewis, head coach of rival Weir High. "Her commitment to excellence and her rigorous training regimen keeps her ahead of the competition. Runners like her only come along once in a coaching career."

Drazba 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.

Drazba joins Gatorade West Virginia Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Sarah McCauley (2010-11, Philip Barbour High School), Alex Dent (2009-10, Hurricane), and Letitia Propst (2008-09 & 2007-08, Elkins), 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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