

Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)

**JOHN CARROLL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ALABAMA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 23, 2012) — In its 27th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Griffin Lee of John Carroll Catholic HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Lee is the first Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from John Carroll Catholic HS.

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 Lee as Alabama's best high school boys cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Lee 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.), Kevin Garnett (1992-93, Maudlin HS, S.C.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-10 junior raced to the Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:13.11, leading the Cavaliers to third place as a team. A three-time All-State selection, Lee also won the Mobile Cross Country Challenge of Champions in 16:27.70. He captured second place at the 2010 Class 5A state meet as a sophomore and finished seventh in 2009 as a freshman.

Also a basketball, baseball and track standout, Lee has maintained a 3.56 GPA in the classroom. A member of the Spanish Honor Society and his school's Honors Choir, he has volunteered on behalf of his church, a camp for children diagnosed with muscular dystrophy and the American Baseball Foundation's Baseball & Academic Skills Instructional Course (B.A.S.I.C.).

"He understands the race and what he has to do," said John Carroll Catholic head coach Bryan Burgess. "If there's anybody out there that you want on your side, you want him, because he's going to get the job done. When it comes time to run the race, he's as focused as anybody. When he's not running, it's all about his teammates. He is the ultimate team player. He's got that leadership quality."

Lee will begin his 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 ESPNHS 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.

Lee joins Gatorade Alabama Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Brandon Hazouri (2010-11, Spain Park High School), Nathan Lewis (2009-10, Cold Springs), Patrick McGregor (2008-09, 2007-08, Hoover) 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.

###