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**BENTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ARKANSAS 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 Will Aenchbacher of Bentonville HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Aenchbacher is the first Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Bentonville 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 Aenchbacher as Arkansas'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, Aenchbacher 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-8 senior raced to the Class 7A individual state championship this past season with a time of 16:24, leading the Tigers to the Class 7A title as a team. A 2011 First Team All-State selection, Aenchbacher earned 13th place and was the fastest Arkansas competitor at the Nike Cross Nationals South Regional championships, crossing the line in 16:02.85.

Aenchbacher has maintained a 3.71 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple community service initiatives in association with the National Honor Society and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

"Will Aenchbacher is a dedicated student athlete and the best runner we have had here the last three years," said Bentonville High head coach Randy Ramaker. "He is a proven leader who excels at everything he sets out to do."

Aenchbacher 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 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.

Aenchbacher joins Gatorade Arkansas Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Christian Heymsfield (2010-11, Elkins High School), Christopher Marchman (2009-10, Sheridan), Cameron Efurd (2008-09, Rogers), and Aaron Hamilton (2007-08, Rogers) 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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