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**THE TATNALL SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE DELAWARE 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 Sam Parsons of The Tatnall School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Delaware Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Parsons is the first Gatorade Delaware Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from The Tatnall 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 Parsons as Delaware'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, Parsons 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-11 senior raced to the Division II individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 15:34.73, leading the Hornets to first place as a team. The Victor A. Zwolak Award recipient as the state's top runner, Parsons placed sixth at the Nike Cross Nationals Southeast Regional championships in 15:28.10 and 67th at the NXN Final in 16:10.43. A three-time All-State selection, he took third at the 2010 Division II state meet as a junior and finished fifth in 2009 as a sophomore.

Parsons has maintained a 3.01 GPA in the classroom. A member of his school's strategic games club and head of the Young Republican National Federation chapter, he has volunteered locally on behalf of a food bank, the Special Olympics, Amnesty International and Shoes 2 Share.

"He has so much passion for the sport, and you can tell when you watch him race," said Tatnall School head coach Patrick Castagno. "He ran the entire state meet out front and alone with two goals in mind: Place first to help his team score and break the 30-year-old existing course record. He did both, and he pushed himself so hard that he broke that record by 20 seconds. To me, this was one of the most impressive races I have ever witnessed as a longtime coach."

Parsons has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at North Carolina State University beginning 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.

Parsons joins Gatorade Delaware Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Sebastian Oja (2010-11, Archmere Academy), Ryan Lee (2009-10, Archmere Academy), Greg Morrin (2008-09, Saint Mark's), and George Vernon (2007-08, Concord) 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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