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**VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE IOWA 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 Ben Anderson of Valley HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Iowa Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Anderson is the first Gatorade Iowa Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Valley 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 Anderson as Iowa'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, Anderson 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 6-foot, 140-pound junior raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:02, setting a state meet record for all classes by three seconds. Anderson won seven of the 11 races he competed in last fall, including victories at the Tom Karpen Invitational, the Indianola Invitational and the Ankeny Invitational.

Anderson has maintained a 3.27 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally as a peer math tutor, with the Hy-Vee Triathlon and as part of multiple community service initiatives in association with his church youth group.

"Ben is an outstanding runner and an outstanding individual," said Valley High coach Tom Trygstad. "He is extremely hard-working and it paid off with a terrific season."

Anderson 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.

Anderson joins Gatorade Iowa Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Marshall Moyer (2010-11, 2009-10, Burlington High School), Lewi Manirumva (2008-09, Washington), and Devin Allbaugh (2007-08, Pleasant Valley) 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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