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**WAYZATA HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 Josh Thorson of Wayzata HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Minnesota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Thorson is the first Gatorade Minnesota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Wayzata 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 Thorson as Minnesota'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, Thorson 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 senior raced to the Class 2A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:29.9. A three-time First Team All-State selection, Thorson earned sixth place and was the fastest Minnesota competitor at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships, crossing the line in 15:38.5. He qualified for the 2011 Nike Cross Nationals Final, where he finished 73rd in 16:15.

Thorson has maintained an 11.49 GPA on a 12-point scale in the classroom. An accomplished vocalist in his school's concert choir, he has served as the online editor of his school's newspaper and has volunteered locally on behalf of the National Honor Society.

"Josh Thorson is as impressive an athlete as I have ever coached," said Wayzata High head coach Bill Miles. "He has been a leader of our team since his sophomore year and has proven to be someone who can step forward and say what needs to be said in order to motivate his teammates."

Thorson 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.

Thorson joins Gatorade Minnesota Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Adam Zutz (2010-11, St. Francis High School), Aaron Bartnik (2009-10, Eden Prairie), Lukas Gemar (2008-09, Moorhead), and Jordan Carlson (2007-08, Rosemount) 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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