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**CARY ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 Thomas Graham of Cary Academy as its 2011-12 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Graham is the first Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Cary Academy.

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 Graham as North Carolina'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, Graham 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 fourth consecutive North Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:09.10, leading the Chargers to second place as a team. Graham placed fifth at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 14:52 and captured ninth at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 15:24.4, earning All-American honors this past fall. He finished 20th at the 2010 Foot Locker nationals as a junior.

Also an accomplished chorus singer, Graham has maintained a 3.86 GPA in the classroom. The senior class secretary and a member of Cary Academy's award-winning math team, he has volunteered as part of multiple community-service initiatives on behalf of the National Honor Society and his school's Key Club International chapter.

"Thomas has a love of running that has allowed him to stay positive and enthusiastic through many years of consistent, dedicated, disciplined and intelligent training," said Cary Academy head coach Conrad Hall. "In competition, he is smart and incredibly mentally tough. He's not just a tough competitor, but he's a student of the sport, and his knowledge of running, training and racing, continues to grow and make him a better runner."

Graham has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Stanford 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.

Graham joins Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Blake Williams (2010-11, Northern High School), Jake Hurysz (2009-10, Eastern Alamance), Taylor Gilland (2008-09, Chapel Hill), and Ryan Hill (2007-08, Hickory) 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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