

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)

**BISMARCK HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NORTH DAKOTA 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 Jake Leingang of Bismarck HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Leingang is the second Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Bismarck 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 Leingang as North Dakota'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, Leingang 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-9 junior raced to a second consecutive Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 14:59.80, leading the Demons to first place as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, Leingang placed second at both the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships, in 15:26.58, and the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships, in 15:10. He captured fourth place at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 15:21.1 and took eighth at the Nike Cross Nationals Final in 15:34.61.

Also a track standout, Leingang has maintained a 3.65 GPA in the classroom. An active member of his church youth group, he has volunteered locally at a soup kitchen and retirement home, in addition to donating his time as a youth running instructor.

"Jake has the remarkable ability to transform himself from a rather quiet, mind-my-own-business type of teenager to a fearless and relentless pursuit of racing rage," said Bismarck head coach Darrell Anderson.

Leingang 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.

Leingang joins Gatorade North Dakota Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Brett Kelly (2009-10, Century) and Joash Osoro (2008-09, 2007-08, Bismarck) 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.

###