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**VERSAILLES HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 Prakel of Versailles HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Prakel is the first Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Versailles 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 Prakel as Ohio'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, Prakel 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-10 junior raced to the Division III individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:19.34. A 2011 First Team All-State selection, Prakel took 14th at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships in 16:15.2. He also placed 80th at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships, crossing the line in 16:11.

Prakel has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom and is ranked first in his class. An accomplished trombonist in his school's concert and marching bands, he has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple community service initiatives in association with the Boys Scouts of America and his church youth group.

"I've never seen anyone who works as hard for his success as Sam Prakel," said Versailles High head coach Mark Pleiman. "He is as driven, focused and self-motivated a student athlete as you will ever find."

Prakel 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.

Prakel joins Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Michael Brajdic (2010-11, Bay High School), Zach Wills (2009-10, 2008-09, Mason) and Donny Roys (2007-08, Medina) 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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