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**CHARIHO HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE RHODE ISLAND 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 Mike Marsella of Chariho HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Marsella is the first Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Chariho 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 Marsella as Rhode Island'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, Marsella 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-1 senior raced to the All-State Meet individual championship this past season with a time of 15:51, leading the Chargers to second place as a team. A First Team All-State selection as named by the Providence Journal and Rhode Island Track Coaches Association, Marsella won the New England Cross Country Championships in 15:26. He took fourth at the Nike Cross Nationals Northeast Regional championships in 16:14.7 and finished 19th at the Nike Cross Nationals Final in 15:42.96.

Also a track standout, Marsella has maintained a 3.52 GPA in the classroom. In addition to donating his time as a youth baseball instructor, he has volunteered on behalf of charity road races, community cleanup efforts, the Westerly Senior Citizens Center and the WARM Center to benefit the homeless.

"In nearly 40 years of coaching I have never had a student athlete who comes close to the talent of Mike Marsella," said Chariho head coach Bill Haberek. "His quality performances have led to team successes impacting Chariho athletic history. His character, determination, work ethic and leadership have impacted the Chariho running program in a most positive way."

Marsella 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.

Marsella joins Gatorade Rhode Island Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Ryan Meehan (2010-11, Bishop Hendricken High School), Jake Sienko (2009-10, Bishop Hendricken), Andrew Springer (2008-09, Westerly), and Nick Ross (2007-08, East Greenwich) 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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