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**RAPID CITY CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH 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 Tony Smoragiewicz of Rapid City Central HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Smoragiewicz is the first Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Rapid City Central 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 Smoragiewicz as South 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, Smoragiewicz 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 senior won the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships this past season with a time of 15:19.6 and qualified for the 2011 Nike Cross Nationals Final, where he finished 11th in 15:38. The 2010-11 Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, Smoragiewicz earned fifth place at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships in 15:15 and took seventh at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships with a time of 15:24. The 2011 Rapid City Journal Athlete of the Year also raced to his second straight Class AA individual state championship this past season in 15:24.84.

Smoragiewicz has maintained a 4.04 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of his church community, he has volunteered locally as an elementary school teacher's aid and on behalf of the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce's junior leadership program.

"Tony Smoragiewicz is a mature young man with many abilities that make him an exceptional leader," said Rapid City Central head coach Loren Kambestad. "His teammates, competitors and opposing coaches all respect him greatly. He represents our school and the whole state very well."

Smoragiewicz has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at University of Michigan 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.

Smoragiewicz joins Gatorade South Dakota Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Josh Heitkamp (2009-10, Washington), Alex Muntefering (2008-09, Parkston), and Bill Kogel (2007-08, Roosevelt) 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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