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**CYPRESS WOODS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE TEXAS BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 23, 2012) — In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPNHS, today announced Craig Nowak of Cypress Woods HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Nowak is the first Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Cypress Woods 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 Nowak as Texas'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, Nowak 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 the Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:16.05, leading the Wildcats to fourth place as a team. Nowak won the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 14:37 and finished 14th at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships. The Nike South Invitational winner, he also took third at the Nike Cross Nationals South Regional championship and third at the NXN Final with a time of 15:26.70.

Nowak has maintained an A-minus average in the classroom. A devoted member of his church youth group, he has volunteered locally on behalf of an area retirement home and community cleanup and recycling initiatives. He has also participated in a service-mission trip to Mexico.

"Craig sets his goals high and works harder than anyone to achieve them," said Cypress Woods head coach Gregory Zarate. "He's an outstanding athlete and student and a true role model for his teammates and school."

Nowak has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Oklahoma State 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.

Nowak joins Gatorade Texas Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Craig Lutz (2010-11, 2009-10, Marcus High School), Reed Connor (2008-09, The Woodlands), and Colby Lowe (2007-08, Southlake Carroll) 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

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