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**SOUTH BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE VERMONT 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 Malcolm Plunkett of South Burlington HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Plunkett is the first Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from South Burlington 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 Plunkett as Vermont'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, Plunkett 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-3 junior raced to the Division I individual state championship this past season with a course-record time of 16:56, leading the Rebels to third place as a team. Plunkett also earned victories at the Manchester Invitational and the Northern Vermont Athletic Conference Metro championships.

Plunkett has maintained a 3.93 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of youth track programs and has participated in a service-mission trip to Ghana.

"Malcolm is extremely devoted to his running and his team, and he's only going to get better with more experience, strength and continued confidence," said South Burlington head coach Geoff Bennett. "He's a great kid and a solid worker."

Plunkett 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.

Plunkett joins Gatorade Vermont Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Brendan Copley (2010-11, Colchester High School), David Sinclair (2009-10, Green Mountain Valley School), Adron Pitmon (2008-09, Mt. Mansfield Union), and Kyle Powers (2007-08, St. Johnsbury Academy) 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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