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**SHADLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE WASHINGTON 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 Nathan Weitz of Shadle Park HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Washington Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Weitz is the first Gatorade Washington Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Shadle Park 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 Weitz as Washington'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, Weitz 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-8 senior raced to third place at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships with a time of 15:20.5. Weitz finished second at the Class 3A state meet in 14:59.3 and second at the Foot Locker West Regional championships with a time of 15:30. He also earned victories at the state's regional championships, the Sundodger Invitational, the Meadlander Invitational and the Eric Anderson Invitational.

Weitz has maintained a B Average in the classroom at The Oaks Classical Christian Academy, where he attends high school and which does not offer a cross country program. He has volunteered locally as a Sunday school teacher and has participated in a service-mission trip to Zambia.

"Nathan is a remarkable runner who has a very savvy ability, at a young age, to know how to compete in a race," said Shadle Park head coach Bruce Hafferkamp. "He's very smart and humble, and he still has a lot of room to grow."

Weitz 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.

Weitz joins Gatorade Washington Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Kenji Bierig (2010-11, Lewis & Clark High School), Shane Moskowitz (2009-10, Central Kitsap), Andrew Kimpel (2008-09, North Central), and Miles Unterreiner (2007-08, Gig Harbor) 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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