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**CABELL MIDLAND HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE WEST VIRGINIA 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 Jacob Burcham of Cabell Midland HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Burcham is the first Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Cabell Midland 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 Burcham as West Virginia'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, Burcham 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-10 junior raced to his second straight Class AAA individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:47.59, leading the Knights to second place as a team. The 2010-11 Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year, Burcham broke the tape ahead of 361 fellow competitors at this fall's Trinity/Valkyrie Invitational, clocking a time of 15:03.

Burcham has maintained a 3.81 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally as a youth running coach and on behalf of his school's Interact Club organizing fundraisers to benefit underprivileged families in his community.

"Despite being a tremendous individual runner, Jacob Burcham always puts the goals of his team first and his individual honors second," said Cabell Midland head coach Chris Parsons. "He has inspired not only his teammates to achieve higher goals, he has also made a tremendous impact on the state of West Virginia."

Burcham 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.

Burcham joins Gatorade West Virginia Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Jacob Burcham (2010-11, Cabell Midland High School), Cody Pelliccioni (2009-10, 2008-09, Morgantown) and Ryan Beabout (2007-08, Wheeling Park) 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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