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Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)

**LAFOLLETTE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE WISCONSIN 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 Chandler Diffiee of LaFollette HS as its 2011-12 Gatorade Wisconsin Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Diffiee is the first Gatorade Wisconsin Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from LaFollette 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 Diffiee as Wisconsin'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, Diffiee 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 junior raced to the Division I individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:35.47. The 2011 Wisconsin Cross Country Coaches Association Male Runner of the Year, Diffiee earned fourth place at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships, crossing the line in 15:32.9. He qualified for the 2011 Nike Cross Nationals Final, where he took 37th in 15:55.

Diffiee has maintained a 3.94 GPA in the classroom. An accomplished artist and guitarist, he has volunteered locally on behalf of multiple community service initiatives in association with the National Honor Society.

"Chandler Diffiee dedicated himself to being the best runner he could be this fall and it showed," said Tom Kaufmann, head coach of rival Madison West High. "He is a champion in every sense of the word."

Diffiee 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.

Diffiee joins Gatorade Wisconsin Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Dan Schubert (2010-11, Appleton East High School), Marcus Paulson (2009-10, Hamilton), Brett Kelly (2008-09, West), and Elliot Krause (2007-08, Appleton North) 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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