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**GRISWOLD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE IOWA GIRLS TRACK & FIELD ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (June 20, 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 Rebekah Topham of Griswold High School as its 2011-12 Gatorade Iowa Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year. Topham is the first Gatorade Iowa Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year to be chosen from Griswold High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the track, distinguishes Topham as Iowa's best high school girls track & field athlete. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Track & Field Athlete of the Year award to be announced in June, Topham joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners in 12 sports, including Allyson Felix (2001-02, Los Angeles Baptist, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.), Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Lolo Jones (1997-98, Roosevelt HS, Ia.) and Bianca Knight (2006-07, Ridgeland HS, Miss.).

The 5-foot-7 freshman distance runner and hurdler won three individual state championships this spring, leading the Tigers to the Class 1A state title as a team. Topham broke the tape in the 800-meter run with a time of 2:14.79, the 1500-meter run in 4:44.03, the 3000-meter run in 10:33.66 and earned second place in the 400-meter hurdles with a time of 1:05.11. The 2011-12 Gatorade Iowa Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, she also claimed first place in the 1500 (4:40.30) and the 3000 (9:58.39) at the Drake Relays. Topham's time of 4:28.92 in the 1500 earned her sixth place at this month's USA Track & Field Junior National Championships and ranked as the nation's No. 18 time by a prep competitor at the time of her selection.

Topham has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. She has volunteered locally on behalf of an area nursing home and rehabilitation center and as a vacation bible school counselor.

"Rebekah Topham has accomplished many great things on the track and has always treated her fellow competitors with respect," said North East Kansas Track Club coach Lance Lenard. "She is the type of athlete that will win a race and then stand just beyond the finish line to congratulate her fellow runners as they cross the finish line. She has given her all to her sport, her family and her faith."

Topham will begin her sophomore 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.

Topham joins recent Gatorade Iowa Girls Track & Field Athletes of the Year Shelby Houlihan (2010-11, East High School), Hannah Willms (2009-10, Dike-New Hartford), Whitney Westrum (2008-09, Waukee), and Betsy Flood (2007-08, Dowling Catholic) among the state's list of former award winners.

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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