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**ST. IGNATIUS COLLEGE PREP. STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE ILLINOIS BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 17, 2013) — In its 28th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Jack Keelan of St. Ignatius College Prep. as its 2012-13 Gatorade Illinois Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Keelan is the first Gatorade Illinois Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from St. Ignatius College Prep..

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 Keelan as Illinois'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, Keelan 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-11 senior raced to the Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 14:05. Keelan also won the Niles West Sectional, the Chicago Catholic Championships, the Pat Savage Invitational, the Connelly-Polka Invitational, the First to the Finish Invitational and the ICOPS Invitational. He finished fifth at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships and was 26th nationally at the NXN Final.

Keelan has maintained a 3.86 GPA in the classroom. A mentor in his school, he has volunteered locally on behalf of a church soup kitchen and a child-care center.

"Jack faced severe disappointment as a junior when he failed to qualify for the state championships," said St. Ignatius coach Edward Ernst. "He showed tremendous character and grit overcoming that disappointment, and was a dominant runner this year. He's been a leader for his teammates, and we'll be a better team next year because of his example and the high bar that he has set."

Keelan 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 the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), 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.

Keelan joins Gatorade Illinois Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Michael Clevenger (2011-12, MacArthur High School), Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11 & 2009-10, Carl Sandburg High School), Steve Sulkin (2008-09, York), and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley) 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 www.gatorade.com/poy.

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