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Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)

**DOWLING CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE IOWA 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 Jason Thomas of Dowling Catholic High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Iowa Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Thomas is the first Gatorade Iowa Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Dowling Catholic 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 racecourse, distinguishes Thomas as Iowa'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, Thomas 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-1, 162-pound senior raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:02, tying a state meet record and leading the Maroons to the state title as a team. Thomas was the top Iowa finisher at the 2012 Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships, placing 12th with a time of 15:54.9, and at the Nike Cross Nationals Final, where he placed 73rd.

Thomas has maintained a 3.96 weighted GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally with the Salvation Army and as part of multiple community service initiatives in association with his church youth group.

"Jason Thomas is one heck of a good athlete," said Matt Jaschen, head coach of Johnston High. "He has really come on strong the last couple of years. When it came time for the big meets, Jason performed in the clutch at a level we rarely see in Iowa cross country."

Thomas 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.

Thomas joins Gatorade Iowa Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Ben Anderson (2011-12, Valley High School), Marshall Moyer (2010-11 & 2009-10, Burlington High School), Lewi Manirumva (2008-09, Washington), and Devin Allbaugh (2007-08, Pleasant 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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