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**BLUE SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MISSOURI 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 Simon Belete of Blue Springs High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Belete is the first Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Blue Springs 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 Belete as Missouri'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, Belete 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 senior raced to the Class 4 individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:48.16, leading the Wildcats to second place as a team. Also the Runner of the Year as named by The Examiner, MoMileSplit.com and the Missouri Track & Cross Country Coaches Association, he captured 15th at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships in 15:55.2 and 41st at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships in 15:43.

Also track standout, Belete has maintained a 4.23 weighted GPA in the classroom. A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, he has volunteered on behalf of his church community and as part of his school's HiSTEP program for tutoring elementary school students.

"For the four years he has been a part of the cross country team, he has made such a large impact on the team," said Blue Springs head coach Frank Gallick. "His role as the team leader is similar to what many would say about a quarterback being the coach on the field or the point guard being the coach on the court. Even though he might shy away from the recognition he gets, I think it is well-deserved for everything he has accomplished."

Belete 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.

Belete joins Gatorade Missouri Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Zach Herriott (2011-12 & 2010-11, Rockhurst High School), Maksim Korolev (2009-10, Harrisonville), Kevin Colon (2008-09, Lee's Summit West), and Eric Fernandez (2007-08, Parkway West) 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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