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**MILLARD WEST HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEBRASKA 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 Joe Harter of Millard West High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Harter is the first Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Millard West 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 Harter as Nebraska'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, Harter 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-8, 118-pound senior raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:22.9, leading the Wildcats to a fifth-place finish as a team. A 2012 First Team All-State selection, Harter earned ninth place at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships, crossing the line in 15:45.4.

Harter has maintained a 3.09 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally on behalf of Goodwill Industries International, a food bank and as a youth track and field coach.

"Joe Harter is a terrific person and he is always upbeat and enthusiastic about everything he does," said Millard West head coach Max Kurz. "He is a tremendous competitor with excellent academic, athletic and personal qualities to be very successful in life."

Harter 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.

Harter joins Gatorade Nebraska Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Jacob Olson (2011-12 & 2010-11, Kearney High School), Jarren Heng (2009-10 & 2008-09, Norfolk Catholic), and Jon Ronhovde (2007-08, Fremont) 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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