

Contact: Adam Woullard (312-729-3627)

**CARY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NORTH CAROLINA 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 Bakri Abushouk of Cary High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Abushouk is the first Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Cary 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 Abushouk as North Carolina'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, Abushouk 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-10 senior raced to the Class 4A individual state championship this past season with a time of 15:31.92, leading the Imps to second place as a team. Abushouk also placed 11th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships in 15:07. During the regular season, Abushouk won five meets by an average of 29.1 seconds, including the Wendy's Invitational, and captured the state's fastest time at the prestigious Great American Cross Country Festival. He finished fifth at the 2011 Class 4A state meet as a junior.

Also a track standout, Abushouk has maintained a B average in the classroom. In addition to working a part-time job, he has volunteered on behalf of the Special Olympics' Project UNIFY program to foster respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities in his school community.

"His discipline and dedication are unmatched," said Cary head coach Jerry Dotson. "He is Muslim, so every year during the cross country season he observed Ramadan with his family. He could not eat or drink during the day. He would get up at 3 a.m. and train, normally running between 10-12 miles. He usually lost around 10 pounds during this time. He is a good friend to his fellow teammates and to runners from other teams. Everybody knows and admires Bakri. Even with all of his success, he has remained very humble. Bakri is the epitome of a student-athlete."

Abushouk has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at North Carolina State University beginning 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 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.

Abushouk joins Gatorade North Carolina Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Thomas Graham (2011-12, Cary Academy), Blake Williams (2010-11, Northern High School), Jake Hurysz (2009-10, Eastern Alamance), Taylor Gilland (2008-09, Chapel Hill), and Ryan Hill (2007-08, Hickory) 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.

###