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**TIPPECANOE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE OHIO 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 Sam Wharton of Tippecanoe High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Wharton is the first Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Tippecanoe 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 Wharton as Ohio'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, Wharton 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 senior won the Nike Cross Nationals Final this past season, breaking the tape in 17:06. A two-time First Team All-State selection, Wharton was runner-up at the Nike Cross Nationals Midwest Regional championships with a time of 15:32. He also finished second at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships, crossing the line in 14:56 and qualifying for the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, where he placed sixth with a time of 15:19, becoming one of two runners in the nation to finish among the top 10 runners at both the Nike and Foot Locker national meets. Wharton also raced to a Division I individual state title, breaking the tape in 15:09.95.

Wharton has maintained a 3.98 GPA in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society, he has volunteered locally as a library aide and at a food pantry.

"Sam Wharton is widely regarded by many coaches around the state as one of the top 15 cross country runners in state history," said Tippecanoe High head coach Byron Kimmel. "His victory at the Nike Cross Final energized our entire community."

Wharton has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Stanford 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.

Wharton joins Gatorade Ohio Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Sam Praker (2011-12, Versailles High School), Michael Brajdic (2010-11, Bay High School), Zach Wills (2009-10 & 2008-09, Mason), and Donny Roys (2007-08, Medina) 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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