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**PARK CITY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE UTAH 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 Ben Saarel of Park City High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Utah Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Saarel is the first Gatorade Utah Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Park City 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 Saarel as Utah'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, Saarel 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-2 senior raced to fourth nationally at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships this past season, with a time of 15:13. Saarel also won the Class 3A individual state championship in 14:56.7, leading the Miners to fourth place as a team. He won the Foot Locker West Regional championship in 15:28 and finished second at the Nike Cross Nationals Southwest Regional championships with a time of 14:52.

Saarel has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. Also a talented musician, he has volunteered locally on behalf of the Park City Interact Club.

"Ben is an incredibly driven athlete," said Park City coach Jeff Wyant. "He ran the fastest time ever by a Utah runner at Foot Locker, and I think he's destined for even bigger things. We haven't seen the best of him yet."

Saarel has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at the University of Colorado 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.

Saarel joins Gatorade Utah Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Clayton Young (2011-12 & 2010-11, American Fork High School), Austin West (2009-10, American Fork High School), Jonathan Nelson (2008-09, Timpview), and Luke Puskedra (2007-08, Judge Memorial Catholic) 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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