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**MEAD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE WASHINGTON 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 Andrew Gardner of Mead High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Washington Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year. Gardner is the first Gatorade Washington Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Mead 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 Gardner as Washington'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, Gardner 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 15:02.3. Gardner was fifth at the Foot Locker West Regional championships and finished 11th nationally at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships. He also earned victories at the Concordia Adidas Classic, the Highlander Invitational, the Mead Invitational, the Mountain West Classic and the Eastern Washington Regional Championships.

Gardner has maintained a 3.40 GPA in the classroom. He has volunteered locally feeding the homeless and shoveling snow for the elderly. He has also raised funds to benefit poor villages in Africa.

"In 27 years as a high school cross country coach, I've never been associated with a finer student-athlete," said Mead coach Steve Kiesel. "He goes 110 percent at any and all endeavors he pursues. He is every parent, teacher and coach's dream."

Gardner will attend the U.S. Air Force Academy this fall, where he will compete in cross country and track and field.

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.

Gardner joins Gatorade Washington Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Nathan Weitz (2011-12, Shadle Park High School), Kenji Bierig (2010-11, Lewis & Clark High School), Shane Moskowitz (2009-10, Central Kitsap), Andrew Kimpel (2008-09, North Central), and Miles Unterreiner (2007-08, Gig Harbor) 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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