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**NORWICH FREE ACADEMY STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE CONNECTICUT GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 10, 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 Brianna Lenehan of Norwich Free Academy as its 2012-13 Gatorade Connecticut Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Lenehan is the first Gatorade Connecticut Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Norwich Free Academy.

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 Lenehan as Connecticut's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Lenehan 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.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-2 senior raced to the State Open championship this past season with a time of 19:09. Lenehan also won the Class LL state title in 18:51 and took first at the Eastern Connecticut Conference Championships. She earned a ninth-place finish at the New England Cross Country Championships.

Lenehan has maintained a 3.91 GPA in the classroom. Also a nationally-ranked Irish step dancer, she has volunteered locally on behalf of both youth running events and toy drives for underprivileged children.

"Brianna was phenomenal this year," said Norwich Free Academy head coach Kara Kochanski-Vendola. "She was very focused on what she had to do to be successful and she put in so much hard work, not just in season, but all summer."

Lenehan will attend Columbia University this fall, where she 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.

Lenehan joins Gatorade Connecticut Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Reid Watson (2011-12, Glastonbury High School), Jackie Nicholas (2010-11, Nonnewaug High School), Lauren Sara (2009-10, Frank Scott Bunnell), Moira Kenny (2008-09, Immaculate), and Heather Stephens (2007-08, Ridgefield) 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 playeroftheyear.gatorade.com.

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