

**Contact: Lauren Rollins (312-729-3607)**

**FIRST BAPTIST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE LOUISIANA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 10, 2013) — In its 28<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Gabrielle Jennings of First Baptist Christian School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Louisiana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Jennings is the first Gatorade Louisiana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from First Baptist Christian 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 Jennings as Louisiana'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, Jennings 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-6 freshman raced to a fifth consecutive Class C individual state championship with a time of 19:29.59 this past season. Also The Times-Picayune's All-New Orleans Area Runner of the Year, Jennings toed the line in five regular-season races this past fall, winning four by an average of 30.3 seconds and recording the state's fastest time with a 13th-place finish at the prestigious Jesse Owens Classic.

Also an accomplished artist, dancer and swimmer, Jennings has maintained a 3.85 GPA in the classroom and has served as her school's student council secretary. In addition to donating her time as a youth running instructor, she has volunteered locally on behalf of her church, the First Baptist Christian School, the National Beta Club and World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization.

"Gabrielle is a true runner in every sense of the word, running not for the awards and accolades, but for her love of the sport," said First Baptist Christian School head coach Todd Jennings. "She truly enjoys every aspect of running, including the ability to reach out to others on her team, as well as competitors, to encourage them to 'just try to do their best' and achieve their goals. This is evident at every meet, where she can be seen yelling and cheering on every runner."

Jennings will begin her sophomore year of high school 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.

Jennings joins Gatorade Louisiana Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Anna Katherine Devitt (2011-12, Christian Life Academy), Kaitlin Flattmann (2010-11, Benton High School) and Malia Cali (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, St. Thomas Aquinas) 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](http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com).

###