

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

**PEABODY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE MASSACHUSETTS 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 Catarina Rocha of Peabody High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Massachusetts Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Rocha is the first Gatorade Massachusetts Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Peabody 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 Rocha as Massachusetts'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, Rocha 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-4 senior captured first place at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional championships this past season with a time of 17:49.5. Rocha qualified for the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, where she finished in second place, crossing the line in 17:29. Also the 2011-12 Gatorade Massachusetts Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, she won her second straight Division I individual championship with a time of 18:06.12, leading the Tanners to a state title as a team.

Rocha has maintained an A average in the classroom. A member of the National Honor Society and an officer in her school's student council, she has volunteered locally as a basketball coach for children with special needs.

"Catarina Rocha is an exceptional runner," said Lisa Owen, head coach at Acton-Boxborough High. "She is the best I have seen in the state in a long time. No one else comes close."

Rocha has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Providence College 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.

Rocha joins Gatorade Massachusetts Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Ariel Beauregard-Breton (2010-11, Deerfield Academy), Andrea Keklak (2009-10, Lincoln-Sudbury Regional) and Emily Jones (2008-09 & 2007-08, The Bromfield School), and 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).

###