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**SUE CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE NEW MEXICO 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 Malia Gonzales of Sue Cleveland High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade New Mexico Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Gonzales is the first Gatorade New Mexico Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Sue Cleveland 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 Gonzales as New Mexico'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, Gonzales 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-1 senior raced to the Class 5A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:59.4, leading the Storm to second place as a team. Gonzales also won the Metro Championships, the Socorro Invitational, the Albuquerque Academy Invitational, the Los Alamos Invitational and the District 1 Championships.

Gonzales has maintained a 3.48 GPA in the classroom. A member of her school's Key Club and also a peer tutor, she has volunteered locally assisting children with special needs.

"Malia was able to avoid injury this year and had a season to remember," said Sue Cleveland High head coach Kenny Henry. "Her performances have been invaluable to our team's success, but I believe her attitude and behavior have been even more valuable, because she has created a model that hopefully others will follow."

Gonzales remains undecided upon a collegiate destination.

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.

Gonzales joins Gatorade New Mexico Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jenna Thurman (2011-12, Del Norte High School), Julia Foster (2010-11 & 2009-10, Albuquerque Academy), Clara Milne (2008-09, Albuquerque Academy) and Rachel Velarde (2007-08, Eldorado) 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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