

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

**STAR VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE WYOMING 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 Hailey Ricks of Star Valley High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Wyoming Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Ricks is the first Gatorade Wyoming Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Star Valley 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 Ricks as Wyoming'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, Ricks 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 raced to her third consecutive Class 3A individual state championship this past season with a time of 19:42.71, leading the Braves to a state title as a team. The returning Gatorade Wyoming Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Ricks also earned 11th place at the 2012 Nike Cross Nationals Northwest Regional championships, crossing the line in 18:44.8.

Ricks has maintained a 3.38 GPA in the classroom. An active member of her church youth group, she has volunteered locally on behalf of an area food bank and organized a 5K charity-fundraiser road race.

"Without a doubt, Hailey Ricks was the premier girls cross country runner in the state this season," said Steve Smoot, head coach at Douglas High. "Her dedication to the sport was evident in her state championship win. Her leadership and fierce competitive drive was equally balanced by her graciousness and exemplary sportsmanship."

Ricks has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at Weber State University 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.

Ricks joins Gatorade Wyoming Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jessica Lemaster (2010-11 & 2007-08, Cheyenne Central High School), Dana Morin (2009-10, Sheridan) and Nicole Peterson (2008-09, Rock Springs) 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).

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