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

**XAVIER COLLEGE PREP. STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE ARIZONA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 12, 2012) — In its 27<sup>th</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with ESPN HS, today announced Sarah Fakler of Xavier College Prep. as its 2011-12 Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Fakler is the second Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Xavier College Prep..

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 Fakler as Arizona'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, Fakler 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-5 junior raced to the Division I individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:48.19, leading the Gators to the state title as a team. The state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Fakler also earned individual titles at the Sole Sports Running Zone Cross Country Festival and the Desert Twilight Cross Country Festival. She finished ninth at the Nike Cross Nationals Southwest Regional Championships and was second in the Team Sweepstakes race at the Mt. Sac Invitational.

Fakler has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of her church community, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the Xavier Xero Club, which promotes environmentally sustainable activities.

"Sarah is a respected, valued teammate and a profoundly motivated competitor," said Xavier Prep co-coach Jeffrey Messer. "She's a truly special student-athlete and, most importantly, individual."

Fakler will begin her senior 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 ESPN HS and the Gatorade high school sports leadership team, 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.

Fakler joins Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Jessica Tonn (2009-10 & 2008-09, Xavier College Prep.), and Nadya Bishton (2007-08, Mountain Ridge) 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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