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**NEW TRIER HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE ILLINOIS 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 Courtney Ackerman of New Trier High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Ackerman is the first Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from New Trier 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 Ackerman as Illinois'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, Ackerman 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 senior raced to sixth place nationally with a time of 19:43 at the Nike Cross Nationals Final this past season. Ackerman also finished 17<sup>th</sup> in 18:02 at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, and was fifth at the both the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships and the NXN Midwest Regional championships. She earned victories at the First to the Finish Invitational, the Libertyville Invitational, the Wheaton North Classic and the Central Suburban League Championships, and also finished third at the Class 3A state meet, in 16:27.

Ackerman has maintained an A average in the classroom. A devoted member of her church youth group, she has volunteered on behalf of multiple service missions to assist underprivileged communities.

"Courtney emerged as perhaps the most talented runner in school history during her freshman year," said New Trier head coach John Burnside. "She's almost peerless in her dedication to work, competition and every other aspect of athletics, but to her, personal achievement has always taken a backseat to team success."

Ackerman has verbally committed to an athletic scholarship at the University of Illinois 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.

Ackerman joins Gatorade Illinois Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Amanda Fox (2011-12, Naperville Central High School), Kayla Beattie (2010-11, Woodstock High School), Lavinia Jurkiewicz (2009-10, Whitney M. Young Magnet), Lindsay Flanagan (2008-09, Lake Park), and Kristin Sutherland (2007-08, Carl Sandburg) 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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