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**SHAKOPEE HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE MINNESOTA 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 Maria Hauger of Shakopee High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Hauger is the first Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Shakopee 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 Hauger as Minnesota'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, Hauger 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 her second consecutive victory at the Nike Cross Nationals Heartland Regional championships this past season with a time of 17:33.5. She qualified for the NXN Final, where she finished 14th in 20:01. A four-time First Team All-State selection, Hauger placed third at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional championships with a time of 17:07, earning a spot in the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, where she finished third in 17:30. Now four-time State Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Hauger also won her fourth straight Class AA individual state championship in 2012, breaking the tape in 13:42.

Hauger has maintained a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. A devoted member of her church community and the president of her school's National Honor Society chapter, she has volunteered locally on behalf of the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life and the Toys for Tots Foundation.

"Maria Hauger is a humble, hard-working athlete and a true role model," said Shakopee High head coach Mark Neu. "She is 100-percent dedicated to making herself better at everything she does."

Hauger 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.

Hauger joins Gatorade Minnesota Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Cassy Opitz (2008-09, Eden Prairie), and Laura Hughes (2007-08, Mankato West) 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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