

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

**BIGFORK HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED  
GATORADE MONTANA 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 Makena Morley of Bigfork High School as its 2012-13 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Morley is the first Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Bigfork 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 Morley as Montana'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, Morley 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 state's returning Gatorade Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year, Morley raced to a second consecutive Class B individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:13.1. The 5-foot-4 sophomore placed third at the Foot Locker West Regional championships in 18:17 and 24<sup>th</sup> at the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships in 18:11.7. Morley finished unbeaten against Montana runners this past fall, winning all six of her regular-season meets by an average of 1:05.1. She finished ninth at Foot Locker nationals as a freshman in 2011.

Morley has maintained a 4.00 GPA in the classroom and ranks No. 1 in her graduating class. In addition to volunteering as part of multiple community-service initiatives on behalf of a leadership course, she has donated her time to her team's annual summer fun run and as a youth athletic instructor.

"She has a great work ethic," said Bigfork head coach Susan Loeffler. "She's very strong mentally and physically. Makena runs every race with a lot of confidence, daring others to catch her."

Morley will begin her junior 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 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.

Morley joins Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Caroline Hardin (2010-11, Bozeman High School), Heidi Turner (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Bozeman) 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).

###